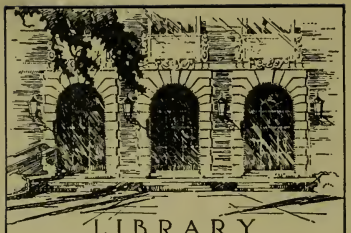
The Middle Aged Lover



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THE

MIDDLE-AGED LOVER.

A Story.

BY

PERCY FITZGERALD,

AUTHOR OF "BELLA DONNA," ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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THE

MIDDLE-AGED LOVER.

CHAPTER I.

THE GARDINERS.

A DINNER-PARTY was being given at one of the great houses at Brickford, and the ladies had just come up, "leaving the gentlemen to their wine"—a phrase that always seems to be used with a certain state and smacking of lips, as though the gentlemen were doing something ennobling. "*Their* wine," too, sounds curiously, as though the liquor

belonged to them before, as well as after, assimilation.

Brickford was a new, but rising manufacturing town, blushing scarlet in the healthy bloom of its cheeks; while its freshly turned clay was being newly baked into long lines of houses. The villas and substantial suburban houses of the gentry were, of course, disguised in grey plaster paletots, and furnished in a stately fashion, but there had been hard work with "the grounds," which can never be extemporised by contractors, and could only be coaxed into what seemed a well-worn green table-cloth, fringed round with some stubbly tufts and bunches. The fine brick clay would break out even in the flower-beds, and the gravel on the walks was mixed with broken scraps of the same material. Brickford seemed sometimes impatient under these

refinements, but was thoroughly at home when allowed to furnish its real native produce, namely, vast red masses of factory, and what might be called the true scarlet oak of the place, the huge chimney.

The house in which the dinner-party was given was that of Mr. William Gardiner, who had been a barrister in fair practice, and was now a county-court judge. The band of ladies sitting in the drawing-room, pursuing the rites carried on at that mystic season, was composed of the following elements.

There was Mrs. William Gardiner, hostess, a sharp, restless lady, who in her youth had been piquante, and was furnished with a vast number of soothing and conciliatory devices—a very worldly person under an air of almost girlish rusticity. Her daughter Fanny, playfully called "Fancy," who stood near her, was a pale and delicate-looking

girl, seemed to be all affection and impulse, was interested to the full in anything interesting that was told to her, and amused to the same extravagant degree at anything amusing. The great lady on the sofa—the commander-in-chief of the party — was Lady Duke, wife of Sir George Duke, K.C.B., a connexion of the Gardiners; while near her was Mrs. John Gardiner, a parson's wife, a rosy, good-natured, and rustic lady, who had left her seven children in bed at home. "Gardiner, the clergyman," as he was usually called, was vicar of Saint Jude's, the new and most important church of the place; a temple that seemed all roof, like a châlet, and whose walls were piebald as it were, being dappled with innumerable coloured bricks. The Gardiners, William and John, were brothers, and the two families were known to be on the most affectionate terms, evidence of which was a

standing arrangement that they should dine with each other every Sunday alternately. Often of an afternoon, when the day's work was done, the brethren were seen trudging out for what they called "a constitutional" among the salubrious brick-kilns and gravel-pits which made up the unvarying suburbs of Brickford.

Will Gardiner was a strongly-built, hearty, honest-looking fellow, with a laugh that cleared the air, and which in a May Fair drawing-room would have disturbed genteel nerves, and have been fairly christened a "horse" one. The clergyman was a short and reserved person, with a black beard and moustache, wearing spectacles, which he was always steadying delicately with his thumb and little finger. He was a quiet soul, had a good deal of what is called dry humour, and was a great admirer of his brother's hearty joviality

and boisterous enjoyment of life. Will Gardiner knew everybody, dined everywhere, and had every one to dine with him; and no officer, or official, or person of rank could pass by, or come within ken of his court, without Will Gardiner's getting up a dinner in his honour. There, over his good wines and, perhaps, better cookery, his merry laugh and hearty stories entertained even the primmest guests. These stories were not of the reminiscent class, "I recollect when I was staying at Frogley," &c.; but of that more piquant sort, which are served fresh and fresh like Devonshire cream or rolls, whose date is that of either to-day or yesterday, and the figures in which are walking about and known to us all. Will Gardiner usually led off with a "Did you hear what happened to the doctor yesterday?"—his boisterous roar of enjoyment, as it were,

giving a local colour to the scene, and calling up smiles of anticipatory relish in the faces of the listeners. He had a positive art of falling in with these sort of good things, a fortune, indeed, given to most, though they have not the art of observing or putting them by for future use.

These William Gardiner entertainments, being of the handsomest kind, and at which very good company assisted, often caused discussion, or, at least, wonder; for he had but moderate private means in addition to his judgeship. It was calculated by the social actuaries of the place, the old maids, dowagers, and the like, that Will Gardiner could not, on the fairest computation, have more than fourteen hundred a year; "and how the deuce"—(this strengthener, of course, came from a male actuary)—"and how the deuce was a man to keep a carriage, give state dinners once a week or

so, and dress that girl of his on such an income?" An appeal to the same strengthener was, perhaps, oftener made in private by honest William himself, who, to the world, seemed to accomplish the feat with ease, if not with a margin for even more extended operations.

This good sort of fellow was not in the least "soft," for all his coarse laughter and good humour. He was rather quick of temper, and when he felt he had been injured or unjustly treated, could show a warm resentment. He was, besides, proud and sensitive. But his affection for his quiet, bookish, and parsonic brother was very remarkable, who, he would declare, only wanted a sailor's cutlass to go on as a pirate or bandit in a melodrama, so ferocious was his coal black ecclesiastical beard. Nor must his worship of that rather faded and artificial young person,

who was his daughter, be passed by. On her he absolutely doted, and on her accomplishments spared nothing. She had some taste for singing, which the best masters at the great towns within reasonable distance were employed to develop. This young lady and her mother were sometimes a little ashamed of their William's rather plebeian merriment, especially when London people like Lady Duke, K.C.B. (for, in their estimation, it was she who really bore those letters of knighthood), were present; but both stood too much in awe of him to make any protest, and found that to affect an enthusiasm for papa and his jokes was a more effectual cover than public disapproval. There are, indeed, only two courses to be adopted in such a case—wholesale repudiation or wholesale adoption.

Thus the mother, whose rôle was affection to all the world, would go round :

"Did you hear darling John, to-night? Is he not droll? Oh! he is another Sheridan, my dear. Sir George always says if he was in London he wouldn't be dining at home a single day."

But this lady's admiration, indeed, extended to all that concerned her or her family. Everything that was theirs, or connected with them, instantly became gorgeous, golden, and beautiful in her eyes. The reader will gather a fair idea of this idiosyncrasy from a remark of hers to a little girl present on this occasion of the dinner, to whom William had presented a doll as a birthday present.

"And did Willie give you that, dear? Oh how lovely! What a beautiful little thing! Now, you must take care of it. Oh!" this in rapture, "*no* one has such taste in choosing a present as Willie."

There was nothing affected in this, for it

was the lady's habit unconsciously to view all things connected with her family with partiality and admiration, and all matters not thus associated with distrust and depreciation. Was any friend or neighbour about to enjoy an advantage—as the marrying a daughter—or obtain promotion of some kind, she could only see the sad inconveniences, the positive drawbacks of such a step; and if she were congratulating the parties, insensibly contrived to dwindle the event into a disadvantage rather than a blessing. With sincere commiseration she would allude to some blemish, assuring that "they ought not to mind it."

So to a friend with a pretty daughter:

"My dear poor darling Fanny! I am so sorry for her; she looks so pale and shrunk away. Absolutely not a bit on her bones!"

A description that applied with more propriety to her own darling girl.

It was hard to cavil at these home truths, for they were attended with an overpowering amount of endearments, kissings, huggings, squeezings. Such was Mrs. William Gardiner, or "Lizzie Gardiner," as she was known to her friends. Of the other Mrs. Gardiner not much can be said, save that she was a good-natured soul, whose function in life seemed to be that of repairing the ravages which that fell tyrant Death made in the circle in which she moved; and possibly that of receiving the exuberant and profuse osculations, squeezings, and darlings which were lavished on her by her devoted relative.

Thus much for the Gardiners of the two branches of the family, assembled at the dinner-party.

CHAPTER II.

THE BRAHAM NAGLES.

THE dinner was given in honour of Sir George, Lady Duke (K.C.B.), and their son, young Duke, who were passing through Brickford. But they could not escape the vigilance of the Customs; for no better douanier in the matter of guests could be conceived than Will Gardiner. He stopped the whole party on the frontier and made them pay him the duty of a dinner. Sir George and his lady, as we have stated, were "far out" connexions of the Gardiners

—she having been a Miss Gardiner—who were very proud of this distinguished military connexion. She now sat enthroned, much gratified with the choice meats and wines, and pleasant dinner which had been set before her. Just as she was delivering judgment from the ottoman as if from a wool-sack—and indeed her law had been accepted obsequiously all through the evening—the door was thrown open, and the servant proclaimed: "Mr. and Mrs. Braham Nagle! *Miss* Nagle!"

For where there is such a trio to be announced—father, mother, and daughter—servants seem to have learned to compensate themselves for their trouble by this extra emphasis on the "Miss."

These were merely the evening guests; who were clearly persons of an unsophisticated kind, arriving at what is a painfully awkward season, during the Eleusinian

mysteries, the solemn and confidential privacy that intervenes before the gentlemen come up. The priestesses always receive such arrivals with a mixture of pity and contempt, as persons glad to partake of the leavings after they, the priestesses, have been filled. And this is sometimes literally the case.

There was a long interval after this announcement, as though the new comers were dressing their ranks outside, or too nervous to make up their minds to enter. Then there appeared a tall, smiling gentleman, with a wiry, short lady hanging gracefully on his arm. Both paused a little way from the door while the gentleman looked round, raising his eyes in an interrogative fashion. Behind them came one who clearly belonged to the same family : and it was significant that the great lady who was smiling in genteel wonder at

the first arrivals, now became serious, and hoisted her glass.

The cause of this sudden show of interest was the appearance of a tall, striking-looking, stately girl, walking with a sort of haughty independence, that contrasted oddly with the deprecatory manner and general air of discomfort of those who preceded her. She was really a patrician-looking creature, both in her carriage and the very arch of her neck—her face was so generally brilliant, her hair so thick and rich, while a look of genius flashed from her dark eyes. Her mother, Mrs. Braham Nagle, had a curiously quaint and almost theatrical air; her hair was in stiff, old-fashioned bands, as they used then to be called; she was dressed in black silk, while a very faded Indian scarf drooped with rather wisp-like tenuity over her shoulders. In short, she was a highly-attenuated

lady with that leanness and shrunkenness, on which old-fashion seems generally to attend as a species of page-in-waiting.

Mrs. William Gardiner came forward to greet the Braham Nagles, not without a sort of trepidation. For it seemed a service of responsibility to go and meet that tall gentleman—to whose arm his wife still clung—and the sinuous and smiling curves of whose face already betokened unctuous and florid eloquence. And there was yet another florid element about him—a richly flowered satin waistcoat of a grey tone.

"How do you do, Mrs. William Gardiner?" he said. "We have not detained you, I trust? But there was a difficulty—a leetle difficulty—about the cabman. Could not find the house. Mr. William Gardiner is well, I trust. He has a genuine mee-ewsical instinct, I can assure you. By the way"—this mysteriously—"I had forgot."

He took his daughter by the elbow and drew her forward.

"Let me, Mrs. William Gardiner. This is our child, Corinna. She is very clever, and promises amazingly. Quite the Grisi, I assure you."

Mrs. Gardiner received this handsome girl good-naturedly, but adroitly got them all into the next room, much as a box-keeper disposes of "orders" that arrive early, in the hindmost and second-rate seats.

Mrs. Braham Nagle, very nervous in this society, was still heard complaining hysterically about "the cabman—so stupid, you know!" Corinna, seated on the sofa, surveyed the company "like a duchess," as her father would have said.

Mr. Nagle, not knowing any one, repaired to the piano, surveying it curiously and critically, as though he were about to purchase it; then struck a treble chord

cautiously, with his flexible mouth drawn into an O, as though he would weigh the matter cautiously before concluding the bargain. Having decided this point, he began to turn over some pieces of music, shook his head as he surveyed the first, then laid it down tenderly, as though it were brittle and would make a clatter. At the next he raised his eyes with an air of pleased recognition, and proceeded to con it over: now nodding graciously as he came to a flowing passage: now frowning severely and pausing, as who should wish to convey "that is a stiff bit of country for you mere musical tailors on horseback; but it won't stop my horse."

Being the only gentleman present, he thus conveyed the idea of being busily occupied, as if he had been engaged specially to make a careful and minute survey of the various articles connected with music,

and report thereon. What might seem to confirm this view was his presently coming over on tip-toe to Mrs. Gardiner, and saying confidentially:

"A fine instrument—a true bichord—a noble Collard, ma'am!"

He would have given some more particular grounds for this high praise, had not a Babel of voices talking together, and of laughers laughing together, suddenly burst out in the next room, as though a school had been suddenly discharged on a playground. Gentlemen were now revealed with arms affectionately laid on each other's shoulders, and pouring into each other's ears stories of exquisite mirth, interrupted by bursts of loud laughter. Some entered surveying the ladies with a social and almost sultanic appreciation; some with a more chastened smile; some held back near the door with a reserve that seemed

almost like alarm. So curious are the different phases of this interesting condition of man, which it would perhaps be rude to describe as the sanctioned and polite inebriety of the drawing-room.

Loudest among the laughers was Will Gardiner, who was holding the General —a placid, grey-moustached gentleman— by both arms, and telling him "as comic a thing as he ever heard in his whole life." In a moment, however, Mr. Gardiner had caught sight of the tall gentleman in the next room, and had rushed noisily to greet him.

"How *are* you, Nagle? Very glad to see you here. Where's the wife and child? I hope you brought them."

"My dear Mr. William Gardiner, we *all* availed ourselves of your kind invitation. There is Corinna — Coe-reen-nah, dear"—thus he sounded her name on

occasions of state—"here is Mr. Gardiner asking——"

"Oh, I declare!" cried William, in admiration. "'Pon my word! Quite a belle!"

"Yes, she is classical. Poor Braham! whose favourite pupil and aide-de-camp I may in a manner say I was——"

"I know that well," said the other. "You often told me."

"——said to me one evening—I think it was on the second day of the Festival in the Abbey—that she was like Malibrong's own born child. The likeness is amazing. I can see it now."

And Mr. Nagle closed his eyes, while his lips moved softly, no doubt as if addressing the departed songstress.

William Gardiner looked at him with an amused air.

"I noticed your music down in the hall.

I call it very kind of you to come in this unceremonious way."

"Not at all. I'm only delighted. I'll just fetch it up and lay it out, so there will be no loss of time."

"My dear sir, no; the servant will bring it."

While this conversation was proceeding, a tall, bright-looking, and decidedly handsome young man was going about the room chatting to this lady and to that, with that almost boyish gaiety which is so engaging a quality. He was perfectly at home, was in good spirits, and, without attempting anything funny, was making them all laugh.

"Tell me," said Mr. Braham Nagle, snatching at the host's arm in a most mysterious way—"you could *not* tell me who that fine-looking young gentleman is, over there, sitting on the low chair?"

"Of course I could. Why, that's a sort

of cousin of ours." Then, in a loud whisper, "Lady Duke's eldest son—a young hussar, sir."

"Fine! Regular Italian-looking! A something now that reminds me of Grimani, who came when we were at Brighton. He used to sing with the royal people sometimes. One of those odd women's trebles, which seem a little foreign to our English ways."

"Revolting, sir," said William, with disgust. "By the way, we must get our handsome Miss Corinna a beau. Here, Master Duke," he added, in one of his loud whispers, "I want to introduce you to a deuced fine girl."

Corinna, who was adorned with a blue sash, worn from her shoulder, like the Order of the Garter, received the presentee with an unconcealed pleasure, that showed she was a natural girl. The happy

father strained over in the direction of the pair, as though there were a crowd between him and them. The spare mamma leaned round the corner to look. As Mr. Nagle saw his Corinna smiling, while the young man made his few introductory conversational flourishes, he began to smile also, swaying to and fro, as if in paternal encouragement.

It was, indeed, all going very well. It is amazing how a confidence springs up in certain cases. The gentleman might have been a husband returned from a voyage, and relating his adventures. The young lady was as interested as though she had been an anxious wife.

CHAPTER III.

"CHERRY RIPE."

SO that little entertainment went on. Now were Mr. and Mrs. William Gardiner going on a joint deputation to Mr. Braham Nagle. "Would he, or would Miss Nagle?—every one wished so much to hear her."

Mr. Nagle motioned over his spouse:

"Our kind friends here are good enough to wish for a little music. If you would not mind, Mrs. B. N. and I will just clear the ground a little. You know it's trying for a poor fluttering child to come out

before a strange audience. Suppose we just, as poor Hopkins used to say—the best agent Braham ever had—play the curtain up a bit?"

A servant had brought in an alarming pile of music, mostly of a frayed and ragged sort; enough, indeed, for a small Festival. Mrs. Braham Nagle placed herself at the noble Collard, and nervously took a short gallop up the course, as it were, "to breathe her fingers." The steed stumbled a little, but the casualty was masked in a great dust, and scattering of gravel and stones. Mr. Braham Nagle stood out away from "the Collard," disdaining music, gazing on the audience with a look of sly humour. For this was to be a buffo Italian duet, full of excruciating fun—that is, of volubility and patter of syllables. It began with "CHIO SONO!" a loud scream from Mrs. B. N., whose voice was very wiry (she had

been a great singer in her day), and which seemed like a cry for help. Her husband, turning half round, made a reply, which, from his scornful shaking of head, seemed to convey some sort of bitter hint that very little of that was to be expected from him.

In this reciprocal strain the opening recitative was conducted.

Then Mrs. Nagle broke into her slow and piteous air, during which time her husband had his eyes fixed on the ceiling, now with a smile of pity, now glancing at her with withering disgust, and now interpolating some spoken, not sung, exclamation of contempt, such as "Ragazza!" Then came his turn. It was amazing how voluble he was, how he poured out words of expostulation, then of anger, then suddenly relapsed into good humour. He seemed to be hugging himself in some

secretly sly and comical enjoyment of the most exquisite sort, but the enjoyment of which he had all to himself, though he strove hard to convey to the audience with winks, and nudges, and sarcastic shaking of his head, how much genuine merriment was going on. Gradually the lady was drawn into coquettish and rather shrill remonstrance; Mr. Nagle pattered over what seemed a paved causeway; while her fingers strove almost ineffectually to keep up with his stronger vocal steed; and finally the whole party, Mr. Nagle, Mrs. B. N., and the struggling hands, came panting and struggling in together, just "pulling up" for one protracted cry, roar, and crash before riding in!

The company listened wondering; but it was considered "very fine" by all, save Lady Duke and a few of the more dainty. Such decidedly histrionic singing had not

been heard in Brickford since the great musical "farmer" brought round his menagerie, to give opera concerts. On your highly-refined people like Lady Duke, and on many more of us, these realistic exhibitions sometimes rather jar.

William, the host, however, was delighted. His great laugh had been heard bursting in at some of Mr. B. Nagle's faces and posturings, and he came rushing up at the close with loud-voiced congratulations.

"Splendid! splendid!" he said, "fit for Covent Garden!"

"Ah, my dear sir, these things bridge over the past. We stood up to sing that at the alderman's little party during the Festival. Catalawney, sir, was expected, but didn't come. Unfortunately got *onroomyd*, sir, at the last moment." By which singular word Mr. Nagle was understood to be referring to the effects of cold. "At

another house Catalawney"—Mr. Nagle always gave the open Italian sounds with a bell-like richness—"I was given to understand, spoke of us, and asked who we were. Grand, swelling creature! Ah, there were voices in those days. Now, sir, it's all wire, wire, wire." And Mr. Nagle shook his head sadly over this decay, which his own organ and that of his lady rather fairly illustrated. Will Gardiner did not follow him *very* clearly, but was impressed.

"I am so glad," he said, "that you sang that before John; it will strike him about the organist business. It must. Such a performance in his church would not be heard every day. Old Humphries is getting past his work, and a little pressure would make him retire."

"Then, my dear sir, *could* you do me the favour—present me to the Reverend John

Gardiner? Poor Braham always used to say that five words were better than five letters."

On this the candidate, for such he was, was led over to the bearded clergyman, who paid him many fresh compliments.

Meanwhile, young Mr. Duke was busily engaged entertaining the daughter of the Nagles. Young people, who are thus delighted with each other on meeting for the first time, take especial pride and exultation in taking care that this mutual relish shall be exhibited to all the world. Corinna, beaming with smiles, was unconscious of the attention she was exciting; while the enraptured youth was pouring out some confidence—the listening to which made her, perhaps, so charming. William Gardiner came to interrupt this delightful communion.

"Miss Corinna, you must let us hear

your charming voice. No excuse will be taken. You must, indeed."

Excuses *were* made, however. But Mr. Nagle intervened authoritatively.

"Come, Corinna," he said, with a sweet smile, "it is most kind of Mr. Gardiner to ask you. Come over and give them the 'Cherry.' The 'Cherry Ripe.' I heard Waylett sing it one night at Grimani's, in a drawing-room, just like this. I did, indeed! She was staying with Grimani at the time, and he had asked just a few of the Connewchenty. Come, Corinna, love!"

To some observers it almost seemed as though Mr. Nagle considered that *he* was going to perform, while his daughter was to turn over the leaves, as it were, for him; so languishing were the glances that he cast about the room, so sweetly did he smile to himself, and close his eyes, as though wrapped in the enjoy-

ment of certain harmonic excursions and strayings with which his fingers were engaged.

Corinna drew herself up proudly and with dignity, as her father thrummed through the jocund symphony of that once popular melody. Then she began to sing; and with a voice so rich, and round, and daring that it seemed to be kept in reserve, as it were, and to be quite capable of emulating the dashing exploits of the more famous prima donna "Catalawney." Heads nodded in delight as she tripped over the airy quavers of the pleasant lilt. Had not every one been engrossed by her, they would have been amazed by the singular pantomime of the accompanist, who conveyed the idea that he was extracting, controlling, modulating these enchanting sounds—his face now turned to hers with a sort of sweet and coaxing smile,

his mouth now assuming a circular shape as she touched a high note.

When a difficulty was surmounted, his head suddenly disappeared altogether, and descended almost to the keys, over which his fingers, although hidden by the head, rattled in renewed confidence. But at the last high note his face lit up with rapture, his hands were in the air, and then descended with a crash, to finish in an easy canter.

Every one was enchanted; even the grim and suspicious face of Lady Duke relaxed.

"I wish to heaven old Doughty had heard that! A true connoisseur—knows all the great fiddlers and horn-blowers in London!" So said Will Gardiner; and the remark excited Mr. Nagle's attention.

Such singing had not been heard in the room since Brickford had been built. As

for Alfred Duke, he was enraptured; and it must be said, that the fine figure and brilliant air of lyrical inspiration in the young singer were sufficient to cause any amount of enthusiasm. Other songs were called for. Some, notably William Gardiner, wished for more of the old English ballads; Mr. Alfred Duke pressed for an Irish melody. Corinna owned that she thought she was more familiar with that department, and Alfred Duke was heard going round the room :—

"Miss Nagle is going to sing, 'When through Life once blest we roam.' Such a treat! Her father says it is her grandest performance. Now, *pray*, let every one keep silent, because all the effect depends on the words."

Corinna then commenced that most charming and touching of melodies, to hear which is a relief after the more hack-

neyed "Minstrel Boys," "Last Roses of Summer," and "Halls of Tara." Her father again appeared to be singing it for her; his face craning painfully, his body out at a slant to the right, and half off the music-stool; his mouth repeating every syllable, smiling an agonised smile, now seeming to deprecate haste, as who should say, "For Heaven's sake, caution, caution!—go tenderly! Pick your steps!" Honest William's eyes filled up, as he stood and listened, his arm affectionately round his parson-brother. At the close a burst of applause came forth. More songs were called, and by twelve o'clock that night Corinna was constituted a heroine, and a grand addition to Brickford!

Every one gathered round her as she finished her song.

"I really never heard singing like it," said William Gardiner, earnestly. But the

homage most grateful was, of course, young Duke's.

"Oh, Miss Nagle, I declare it's all but divine—divine! It goes to one's heart."

The father listened with half-closed eyes. "She did it well; ve-ry well—there might have been a little more rall-tan at the last three bars. Poor Braham always said *that* was half the battle in singing. Put on the break, here, there, and judiciously. Then let all go with a run!—that I take to be the golden rule."

"I don't agree with you at all, Mr. Nagle," said the young gentleman, enthusiastically. "It was perfection—could not be improved; and as for the rall-tan, whatever you mean by that——"

"Ah, a little professional abbreviation—short for rallentando. But it's a great art! By the way, you have an organ, sir, *I*

know; I see it in the shape of your mouth. You have the true taste and you have instinct. You have melody, sir, inside. Pray let us hear you."

"Do, Mr. Duke. I should so like to hear you," added Corinna.

"Oh, absurd!" said the young man, almost blushing. "Why, I have never sung since the supper parties at college. You'd only laugh at me."

"I laugh at you!" said Corinna, "no, indeed."

The young lady searched among the music, apparently a little hurt, and then sought her chair. Mr. Duke, distressed, followed her.

"I did not mean—really no; but I am always saying stupid things."

"Well, we only asked you to sing," she said.

"If you really wish it," he said, with

some embarrassment, "I am sure I should be delighted—anything to please *you.* I do know, that is I used to sing at the suppers a thing called, 'In this Old Chair my Father sat;' but I don't know the accompaniment."

"Papa does," said the young lady; "at least he could follow you."

"In this Old Cheeayre," said Mr. Nagle. "Dear me, to be sure! How these things touch up the past! It belongs to a class of songs we call 'strainers'—require tin throats to do 'em properly. There was an impostor called Triphook, who came down to Brighton to give a *chamber* concert, as he called it—tickets half a guinea, if you please, and he sang that very thing!. But he soon blew up, though. Not even the sweeper of the rooms paid! Even the great Simms, who distends his lungs at the oratorios—Ah, my dear sir, these things

won't do—*he* finds the lid coming off sometimes."

Thus encouraged, young Mr. Duke, in rather faltering tones, sang the touching associations connected with the old chair in which his father sat, with the companion one in which "his mother smiled"—it would seem, from the context, to the exclusion of sitting. He was terribly frightened, and, to say the truth, the performance was a sorry, not to say a ridiculous one.

"My goodness," said William Gardiner, "what can Alfred Duke mean by making such an exhibition of himself! Some one ought to stop him."

But Mr. Nagle led him over the ditches and hedges in the most soothing, tender, and paternal style, his face distending every moment as one would encourage an infant, his mouth making all the notes. Lady Duke listened scornfully, and at the

last bar gathered up her shawl lightly and rose to go.

"A voice of great capability," Mr. Nagle was saying: "only wants leading out. Good gracious, Corinna, how like Grimani the night he directed Lady Towler's concert! I declare if I was behind a door now, I could hardly——"

But here he was interrupted.

The party was breaking up. There was a general wishing good night. The musician and his family were a little disturbed at young Duke's disappearance with his mother and father, without paying them, or Corinna, rather, the civility of "Good night." But after a short delay they were much relieved by his reappearance. He had put his parents into the carriage, but "must go to the club for a short while" before returning home.

Here were the Nagles wishing warm

and grateful "Good nights." Most delightful, indeed, it had all been. "Corinna," he said, "was in the seven-and-twentieth heaven"—a multiplicity of beatitude not warranted by the text. "Come again?" Indeed he would.

Young Mr. Duke must go down and "opera cloak" Miss Corinna, which he did tenderly; her tall parent, who was quite ready to go, being in a sort of rhapsody of admiration over a very ordinary match-box that was on the chimney-piece.

"Wonderful," he said to Mrs. Nagle, "really wonderful how they make these things! The ingenuity—the foresight—the benevolence—the kindliness——"

The good man fancied he was speaking of Providence—but he was making play, as it were. The maid in charge was gazing in wonder at his raptures over the match-box.

After a decent interval, when the whisperings, or what the indecent would have called "sniggerings," had died away, Mr. Nagle laid down the match-box, and said :

"We are going to walk, to perform a little pedal passage home. So da capo, my dear sir, for some other night. God bless you !"

"Nonsense," said the young man, "I am going by the Crescent." He knew their address already. "I shall see you that far."

He did not see much of *them* that far ; for he and Corinna followed a long way behind. Mr. and Mrs. Nagle straying on in front, Mr. Nagle being seized with admiration for the stars, the streets, the gas-lamps, for everything in short.

"It was charming," said Corinna. "I am sure you sing well."

"And *you* say this. How happy it makes me. To tell you the truth I was not thinking of the words, but of something else. That was what gave the idea of such feeling to you. Oh, Corinna——"

"Halloo, you sir!" the conventional testy father would have exclaimed. But it must be remembered that the young warriors of our day receive the most prodigious encouragement from the admiring demoiselles with whom they consort, so that in a single night a fair maid has been known to be wooed and won. Competition is so brisk, and the market so—though this seems rather a disrespectful strain. In short, the young gentlemen are privileged, more or less, to say what they please.

"Recollect," said Mr. Nagle, impressively, on his steps, "this house, such as it is—lodgings, second floor—is always open to you. Seriously, my dear sir, I am

anxious about that voice. We should not trifle with these blessings. In my humble way I should be delighted. Drop in any morning or any night—any time that suits you, and we'll take you over the roulados. The Do-o-o—remifasolasid-o-o-o!" chanted Mr. Nagle, with animation.

"Oh! I'll come to-morrow, the first thing," said the young man, in his off-hand way.

"Then you won't forget," said the charming Corinna in a low soft voice; their parents had discreetly turned into the dark and narrow hall, quite careless of their child. Then he said good night.

They entered their modest lodgings in the Crescent, where the trio gazed on each other with a sort of smiling satisfaction. At least Mr. and Mrs. Nagle did. In Mr. Nagle's countenance it was triumph—soft and rapturous triumph.

"It is very pleasing, all this," he said, with half-closed eyes. "Corinna, my girl, it was well done to-night."

"He's in love with her," said Mrs. Nagle, enthusiastically, and rather rudely coming to the point.

"Oh! hush!" said her husband, austerely. "Don't speak in that way. All in good time; it promises well. I like the young fellow very much."

"Oh, he was so nice," said Corinna, dreamily. "I think he would give up the whole world for one he liked."

"One thing is clear," said her father, loftily. "I was more than justified in breaking up at that beastly hole, where I and my talents and my family were thrown away—utterly thrown away. A country village. Faugh! I wanted a field, and here it is——"

"And it was such a success!" said Mrs.

Nagle, again wandering astray. "The Cherry took the whole party by storm."

"The place will be a mine, I foresee. I shall start the Harmonic Matinées again, raising the subscription to two Geeneys. Eight lessons a Geeney—why it is beggarly, sir!" (Mr. Nagle often thus addressed an imaginary male disputant.) "Just worthy of the workhouse. I'll *not* do it. Grimani got his guinea; why shouldn't I as well as an old caterwauler like that! But three a guinea will do for the first. Then we can raise—screw up the pegs tighter."

Mother and daughter presently retired to confide in each other—Corinna, we may presume, to unfold all the delightful things Mr. Duke had said to her. Then the ladies disposed themselves to sleep sweetly, while Mr. Nagle remained planning gorgeous musical schemes.

CHAPTER IV.

THE NAGLES AT CHURCH.

THE "hole" to which Mr. Nagle had made such contemptuous allusion was an obscure little town in Wales, into which the family had been driven, two or three years before, by stress of weather, as it were. It was a rude spot; and a music-master is about as much wanted in such places as he would be at some newly-found gold diggings. No one at such benighted places cares to learn music, even were it taught at sixpence a lesson.

This "miserable bog," as he was fond of calling it, did not even afford subsistence to an organist, as the population were chiefly dissenters, and relied on their own unaided throats. As for Corinna, her charms of person and voice were equally thrown away. There was no one, indeed, to admire. Corinna, and a venerable "Broadwood" of angular build, and of buzzing interior sounds—that in forte passages rose into a jangle—were the only treasures and two most valuable pieces of property possessed by the family. "The Broadwood," and "my girl Corinna," were the words oftenest in Mr. Nagle's mouth. In all their distresses—and they had had many—the faithful instrument had always been retained, and no matter how small their humble apartments, "the Broadwood" was somehow hoisted up the narrow stairs: though once or twice it had been in sore peril from

seizure. This would have been a cruel profanation: for the legend ran that the great Braham had once carelessly strummed upon its keys—now grown as yellow as an old set of teeth—the first rude outlines of "'Twas in Trafalgar's Bay!"—since become immortal. It was scarcely wonderful, then, that this relic should be regarded with veneration, or that like "my daughter and my ducats," which the Jew was so concerned about, Mr. Nagle should have always coupled his daughter and his piano.

Mr. Nagle boasted of being connected with a gentlemanly family, though after a hazy fashion. It was understood he was allied with certain Nagles of Naglestown "in the North," who had behaved scandalously to this member of their house; though it must be said in justice to him that both statements were generally made for him, and that beyond sad movements of his eyes,

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and significant shakings of his head, no very distinct statement on his side could be quoted. The impression left was that he preferred "to wipe out the past," and suffer the consequences of his original error, whatever it was. An assumption, for which there was better authority, was that he had whilom trod the boards in English opera, and, it was believed, had played with the enchanting Caradori Allen, though some affirmed that he had done no more than carry a white night-gown as second Druid, and had been merely addressed collectively, in company with a large number of ladies and gentlemen, by the fair singer. His little biography may be completed by one more fact, that the lady he married enjoyed tolerable practice at Brighton as lady professor of singing, with shadowy expectations from a relation in trade, who, however, was glad to gain a

reputation for just severity by declaring she should not have a sixpence of his money for marrying a fellow that painted his face and bellowed on a stage. Such is a little sketch—all that is known, indeed—of the previous history of Mr. and Mrs. Braham Nagle.

Their daughter, as may have been guessed, was a practical girl enough; but with a certain lofty ambition, and an undeveloped romance which no one would have suspected. In all the shifts to which their life had exposed them, she had always shown a dignity, and even haughtiness, as though she were looking to some future stage of life where she would be free from the "eternal exercises," and "the Broadwood." Yet she did not disdain the profession to which her father, in many a family council, destined her—both father and mother fondly looking forward to a

proud moment when she was to come out in "The Bohemian Girl." Or, as the Italian Opera often filled its ranks from English recruiting districts, why should she not belong to the great cage of singers, and come forth at Covent Garden as SIGNORA NAGLIONI! Her voice would fill that vast house as effectively as that of any of "the Italian squad;" her bell-like organ would ring melodiously through that vast enclosure. To this glorious apotheosis Braham Nagle ever fondly looked, though he had as yet taken no serious steps in the direction. "Wait till she ripens," he would say; "her voice wants matewering, and mellowing," two delightful juicy words to which he was partial.

The following morning was Sunday, and the Nagle family set forth to attend church, a spiky structure with a moist clayey air, and dappled over in diaper patterns of

white and black bricks. It can hardly be said that Mr. Nagle came for devotional purposes, his attention being absorbed by a rite that was going on at the other end of the building, namely, the performance on the organ, which "old Humphries" was handling. The demeanour of the critic was infinitely scornful. At first he would look back with curiosity, as though he were disturbed at his devotions by something strange going on at that end of the building. Then he seemed to grow certain that something was wrong—something almost barbarous. His expressive face conveyed all this by a certain pantomime—elevation of the eye-brows, pitying smiles, shaking of head; with then a resolute but vain attempt to fix his attention on his devotions. At times he would give a violent start or shiver as though his nerves were jarred by the execrable performance. Some

were amused by these antics, but many more were impressed, and began presently to look round and shiver likewise; and before the day was over agreed at the Sunday dinner that old Humphries was playing execrably, was past his work, and that having subscribed so much for the new church, they ought really to have a suitable performer.

There were some other persons who came to that service for purposes very different from that of following the rites that were going forward. The music-master's handsome daughter, though not over "stylish" in her dress, was still as brilliant as gay ribbons, selected in accordance with the rather theatrical taste of her mother, could make her. From the next pew a pair of admiring eyes wandered in contemplation of her beauties. Young Duke was the one that strayed most from

his devotions on this occasion; nay, it is to be feared, was actually led to the new brick church for some end wholly different to that of devotion. When the congregation came out he at once joined the Nagles, and all walked home together to the Crescent, where Mr. Nagle insisted that his friend should honour them by taking share of their "crust and rind of cheese," otherwise of luncheon.

The young man was delighted. He looked with veneration on the modest room where his divinity was enshrined, and above all on the sacred instrument, the Broadwood. On the other hand, the homage that was paid to *him* was quite touching. Each Nagle face was turned to him like so many sunflowers, watching every motion, smiling in anticipation, chorusing in semitones at all he said. Such a situation is always very seductive, and even fascinating

for a young man who has chiefly associated with men. It is a new revelation; for it is the new discovery of the preciousness of one's own gifts that may hitherto have been rather slighted in the bosom of one's family.

Then Mr. Nagle went over to the instrument, and lifted the attenuated and lath-like flaps which contrasted with the solid and handsome frame-work of modern instruments, and insisted on having a private audition of Mr. Duke's vocal powers.

"Just, now, let us do a little of the Do-re-mi-fa-sol!" and the old instrument gave forth from its yellow jaws what seemed a distant and jangling peal of cracked bells.

The youth was a little shy at first, but led on gradually by the applause of the bystanders, was presently giving forth those prolonged calls and cries by which the human voice is supposed to be best exer-

cised. The music-master led him on carefully, his eyes blinking, his mouth inviting the notes, the whole family quite in ecstasy.

"It is curious," said Mr. Nagle, stopping short, "it's quite the same Tamber"—it may be guessed that the word in Mr. Nagle's mind at this juncture was *timbre*—"as Spollio's, the man who came out at the King's Theatre. He was thought to have raced Rubini, neck and neck."

"Or throat and throat," said Mr. Duke, smiling.

"Ha, ha; very good! But afterwards cracked on his high C. Terrible, sir, terrible! I know it for a fact from Grimani and others," added Mr. Nagle, mysteriously, "that no less than half an octave was grafted on, sir, to his register. I did the same with Miss Wilkinson—forced—developed—squeezed—soothed—and when that girl left me she had three notes more

than when she came! I made her a present of those three notes! Of course, got no thanks. As for *your* organ, my dear Mr. Duke, we could fertilise it in the most surprising manner. I could engage, mind you, to lift it two within a month!"

The young man listened, wondering and delighted.

"Somehow they never seemed to care much for my musical gifts at home," he said; "and to tell you the truth, I never considered the matter much; but if you really think that I have a voice, I do wish you would take it in hand. My father and mother go away to-morrow: but I shall stay on here for some time. I find it a very pleasant place."

The family interchanged glances. This departure had been the rock ahead, and had caused Mr. and Mrs. B. Nagle some anxious moments' discussion, Lady Duke

appearing to be a person likely to act with promptness and vigour, and exceedingly dangerous to encounter. Here she was, retiring from the scene, either unconscious of danger, or, more probably, overpowered by the determination of the young man. Corinna's eyes sparkled, and her handsome lips took the shape of a smile.

"We were so afraid that you were going away," she said.

Here Mr. Nagle became absorbed in some perverse harmonies which *would* not resolve themselves, and which, like restive horses, he was determined to force into doing their duty. His daughter and her admirer strayed over to the window, while Mrs. Nagle, though unfamiliar with counterpoint, became absorbed in papa's interesting struggles.

Later, over "the rind of cheese and

crust," it was arranged that the lessons should begin on the morrow.

"My time," said Mr. Nagle, frankly, "is with me, money. Unhappily, so it is" (unhappily, so it wasn't). "I would dispense such little knowledge as I have, in your case, Mr. Duke, without any Ee-mo-lewmentary views"—one of our professor's richest words—"but we will put it as low as we can——"

"My dear sir," said the young man, "pray don't speak in that way. I must insist on being placed on the same footing with your other pupils. I really insist, or we must consider the whole at an end!"

"Well, well, if you take it that way, be it so. We'll put it at, say, half a Geeney a lesson—" an arrangement which, however, did not answer to the request of being placed on the same footing with the other

pupils. Mr. Nagle then took out a rather greasy little memorandum book and searched through various pages of close writing, which affected to record the crowded engagements of the coming week. "Monday—two. No, *that* won't do. Tuesday—four—six; hardly—though we could put *her* off. Wednesday—no we must manage Monday somehow. There," added Mr. Nagle, in desperation at the inconvenient crush, "let us say Monday—at twelve. You shall have your appointment for that hour."

During this pecuniary arrangement, Corinna, unlike other heroines, looked on calmly. She saw nothing indelicate or unromantic in the discussion. The young man was a little surprised. But he did not yet know her character.

In this way it was arranged. In this

way, too, began that extraordinary attachment of young Duke's—"infatuation" it was presently called—which soon began to be the talk of Brickford.

CHAPTER V

WILL AND JACK.

HONEST Bill Gardiner saw all that was going on; and in his hearty, noisy fashion, expressed his delight and intention to forward the business in every way.

"She's a fine, noble girl," he said, "and fit to be a lady." And when his wife would contemptuously murmur something about disparity of station, William Gardiner burst into one of his loud laughs, and declared seriously that now-a-days good looks and good behaviour were preferred

to mere pedigree. Braham Nagle was a right good fellow, and they must ask him to dine the next time, and not have him coming sneaking in in the evening, like a fiddler coming to play at a ball. As a matter of course, Nagle must "form" the voices of the Pollys, Lucys, and Marys of the family, who were, indeed, already under instruction at the hands of Miss Parker, the governess; and Will was now pressing his brother Jack to secure Mr. Nagle's musical services.

"Have Nagle," he would say to every one; "have Nagle at once, if you want style, finish, and the true touch. He was taught by Braham. By the way, I'll tell you as good a story as ever you heard in the whole course of your life about Braham, which Nagle told us the other night."

Bill Gardiner, indeed, was always full of these good stories "as you ever heard in

the whole course of your life," and which he told boisterously and noisily. They were mostly in a broad, low comedy style, and accompanied by such roars of enjoyment, that it was impossible for the listener not to join. It may be said, however, that his musical taste did not keep pace with this hearty enjoyment of music. Like many other enthusiastic people, he made two mistakes : he mistook pantomime for singing, and supposed that the recitation of familiar words was the same thing as singing. Therefore, he assumed that Mr. Nagle's performance of "Sally in our Alley" was one of the most exquisite, refined, and touching things in the whole history of music.

These things he impressed on his brother, "Jack Gardiner, the parson," as he was familiarly called in Brickford, to distinguish him. It was pleasant to see the

two brothers together every Saturday taking their long walk in the suburbs among the brick-pits and lime-kilns, Will's arm round his brother's in an affectionate fashion, whilst its owner poured out stories and put questions, and made the air ring with loud laughter. Never was there such an affectionate pair. Damon and *his* brother paled off by comparison. While Will had the usual shilling, Jack was to have the affectionately divided half. They suggested two enthusiastic young college friends rather than such elderly sages.

During these walks Bill impetuously settled all the Nagle affairs. Nagle must be the new organist; Nagle must give lessons to the parish all round; Nagle's daughter must marry that young spark. This wholesale adoption of a comparative stranger may seem a little surprising, but such was "the way" of this good-natured

fellow, who in his time had gone about with many a goose, which he puffed and praised to his friends as an undoubted swan.

"I say, Jack," said Will, on one Sunday walk, as he was dragging his brother along, "we must get Old Doughty, when he next comes down, to hear Miss Corinna. We must make the old boy useful. He knows all the musical swells and pundits, has Costa and Company to his scraping parties at Warwick-street. We'll get introductions from him, and have Miss Corinna brought out at St. James's Hall, my boy!"

This, for our ardent friend, was the grand theatre of success, and to come out at that well-known place of exhibition, either as lecturer, Ethiopian, conjuror, singer, or panoramist, was to have secured fame. This idea was founded on his own partiality for the place, as whenever he

went up to town he always repaired to this temple of amusement, and returned enchanted, giving his family a vivid rehearsal of all he had seen and heard, whether Ethiopian or necromantic. The dining-room at his house often re-echoed with his burst of laughter as he repeated the jests and repartees of that uncommonly diverting fellow, Jim Stackney, "one of the most humorous beggars you ever heard," and so on. There was certainly a little inconsistency in his views with regard to Corinna, supposing that he really hoped to see her appear on this platform; for he had announced already that all his energies, with those of his friends, were to be bent towards securing the young admirer for her in lawful marriage. As Old Doughty fills a rather important part in this narrative, at this stage some attention must be devoted to him and to his condition.

CHAPTER VI.

OLD DOUGHTY.

OLD DOUGHTY, were his family documents, certificates, &c., duly scrutinised, would be found to be not so very old after all. He was, in fact, neither grey nor stooped, and not very old-fashioned in dress or manner, but more old and "dry" in mind than in body; a cold, grey-eyed bachelor, who lived by himself, and at a club. He was a retired civil servant, and had a pension of three hundred a year. He disliked young men, and was devoted to but one thing in the world,

music; and from his rooms in Warwick-street, Pimlico, were heard at midnight the hurried gallopings of fiddle-bows, and the horny agonies of the violoncello, when the performer was giving way to expression. The quartettos of Mozart and Haydn were thus interpreted, the host at times taking the viola, though his fingers were weak from nervousness and delicacy, and his tone not strong. He was certainly a true amateur, and all the money he could spare went for operas, chamber music, and concerts, his face being familiar to all musical habitués. His hair was thin and dark, but there was an extraordinary sweetness in his face which attracted those who knew him well. He was about forty-four or forty-five, wiry, and well-preserved; his figure showed a curious cragginess or sharpness at the shoulders, with a corresponding spareness at the small of the back. Though

he wore a modern coat, it always would assume a certain muffler-like "highness" about the collar. He had a nervous fidgety manner, and his gentle grey eye would roll with uneasiness on any one who tried to be free or friendly with him. As to his character, some said he was stingy, yet the "fiddlers" who came to play in Warwick-street found at the end of the night a handsome and liberal supper, with champagne, and other delicacies, laid out for them. He had somehow a reputation for being sour and crabbed, yet these "fiddling gentry," as the landlady called them, declared he was pleasant, jovial even, and kindly.

At intervals he came down to Brickford for change of air, for the place suited him. The brothers Gardiner, especially Will, tried hard to be friends with him; but he seemed to shiver under the boisterous

blasts of Will's merriment, while the ladies of both families could not conceal their amusement and even contempt at his ways. He was not old enough to have the pleasant, softened compatibility of the official elderly relation ; nor was he young enough to fall in with the ideas of an agreeable cousin. Hence they were all "shy" of him.

It was known, too, that there was a little history connected with him, and that some twenty years before he had been "crossed in love." This ought to have made him "interesting," but somehow only excited a sort of amusement. Old Doughty in love ! Absurd ! What a comic idea ! But the real hardships of the poor gentleman's case was this sobriquet of Old Doughty, which was utterly unmerited, but against which arguments, dates, expostulations, were utterly powerless. Even the love story

contributed to the delusion. Brickford would have him Old Doughty, and Old Doughty he always was.

He came once or twice to dine, literally as overpowered by the obstreperous pressing of the impetuous Will, as though he had been seized, bound, and brought away to the dinner-table, but he did not make a favourable impression. He had a small, clear, sharp voice, and his comments on the rallying speeches of the ladies were cold, distrustful, and even sarcastic. He was pronounced to be "a curmudgeon," —he had "snarled" and "yapped" all through dinner. When one of the girls went to the piano, he gently expressed his disapproval.

"She is wasting time," he said, "and desecrating a noble art. All this is no more than learning steps from the dancing-master. Where there is no natural taste,

it is cruelty to the child, who might learn something that she could really excel in. I know it seems ungracious to tell you this; but you said I was a judge, and insisted on having my opinion."

On this we may be sure he was voted a downright bear, without manners or breeding. "After all, he had really little or nothing to go on. Any one that saw his den in Warwick-street would say that, and to know a few fiddlers and scrapers, was easy enough in all conscience."

Notwithstanding this, and other unsatisfactory attempts at cultivation, the male Gardiners did not give him up. Indeed there was a curious, wistful look in his face, that appealed, as it were, for sympathy, and suggested some old suffering.

In due time it was insisted that he *must* hear Corinna, and encourage her with due praise, when he said in his "sour way:"

"None of you were pleased when I last gave my opinion. I really have no opinions, and can give none. If I had any I should keep them to myself."

"But hang it, Doughty, a poor girl, who wants to work for her family. Are we to do nothing for our fellow-creatures?"

"Not in music; it is too sacred a thing to be playing tricks with and recommending persons who may turn out impostors. We may give characters to servants who are robbers and drunkards; it seems there is no harm in that. But for Heaven's sake let us keep clear of that in MUSIC!"

"You are a very odd creature, Doughty," was his relative's complimentary remark, and on that dropped the subject. Afterwards, as he came but rarely, the intercourse between him and the family was but of a slender description. He continued his life, and they continued theirs.

A few days after the time when this story commences, Mr. Doughty had come down to Brickford and had brought his favourite "genuine Guanerius" (an article, by the way, of which the world seems to possess enormous quantities) to comfort his leisure moments.

CHAPTER VII.

"THE DYING SWAN."

THINGS were promising very fairly for Mr. Braham Nagle in Brickford. He began to think of a sort of Orphean power of stirring, if not the stones of the place, at least the huge masses of brick, as he walked along. He would revive the "Harmonic Matinées," with arrangement for tickets, at "two Geeneys the course of twelve," and a reduction on family tickets; though two geeneys seemed a ridiculous price considering the prospects of the family.

"Mud-cheap, mud-cheap, sir," he said contemptuously to the imaginary listener who attended him in such discussions. "But I'm not going to do grinders' work now. It's high time to stop all that. I've let myself down too much. No, no! that must come to an end. I've given myself and my 'method' mud-cheap, mud-cheap, sir!" This was a favourite expression of the music-master's.

And in truth things were promising well for the family. Various proprietors of the chimneys and the vast mills of brick were driven, by the overpowering importunities of Bill Gardiner, to engage so famous a professor for their children, and very soon he was assuming the air of an overworked cabinet minister, striving to make his engagements compatible with each other. He had established commercial relations with the one music-shop of the place,

which did but a meagre business, and where he was received with profound homage. Here he purchased those ballads which he brought to his pupils, and on which he received "the usual allowance;" but it must be said that there was no ballad in the wide domains of human composition which so satisfactorily answered the purposes of instructions, as "a little thing of his own," published many years ago, which bore the title of "The Dying Swan"—the title-page of which, being characteristic of the man, and, indeed, of many other men, may be inserted here :

SUNG AT THE HARMONIC MATINEES.

THE DYING SWAN!

WORDS BY

SIMPLICIA.

THE MUSIC, COMPOSED AND DEDICATED TO HIS PUPIL,

MRS. HOBSON COBB,

BY

BRAHAM NAGLE,

FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR OF THE HARMONIC MATINEES,
AUTHOR OF THE METHOD FOR THE VOICE, ETC.

LONDON:
PUBLISHED BY KINTER AND STUBBS.

Every new pupil was expected to make him or herself master, or mistress, of this lyric; and it must be said that the entire sale of the work was confined to the human nature that was formed by Mr. Nagle. A number of copies were ordered down to meet the anticipated demand. The general appearance of this chef-d'œuvre at various houses in a small district, produced rather a monotony—swans, as Bill Gardiner remarked, dying about in every direction.

But for the gallant young Alfred Duke, when had Mr. Nagle a more eager pupil, or one that followed the Do-re-mi-fa with such enthusiasm? The truth was, it became not so much a series of lessons as one long lesson. Say that the hour fixed was two o'clock. Mr. Duke would arrive about one, and the professor would drop in

about half-past two, harassed by the multiplicity of engagements.

"Hunted, sir, hunted!" he would exclaim. "I envy the cab-horse, and would change with him this moment. My dear Mr. Duke," he added, solemnly, "take this warning: break stones, sweep up the mud in the streets, pick oakum, go down and live in the sewers, but—never embrace tuition as a profession!" Which, as addressed to the young gentleman, might seem a superfluous warning.

"It's heart-breaking, sir! Not for the work, but for the character of the work. There are girls brought to me, sir, by their mothers, poor ignorant creatures, with no more voice than the chimney-pot on that house. I suppose they expect me to find them voices! But I can't lend myself to the imposture; there are plenty of hacks about ready for jobs of that kind. Let

them go to them. I can't do it, sir. There's that fellow up in town, Tympano, who teaches the duchesses, and all that lot. *He'd* teach anything they'd bring him,—a gridiron, if it had a coronet on it!" A singular combination that made Mr. Duke smile.

Actuated by this fine feeling for his art, Mr. Nagle assumed a worn and persecuted air, and then changing to a cheerful tone, would exclaim :

"Now for our friend Do-re-mi-fa!"

The lesson would continue until about four or five, and indeed could scarcely be styled a lesson, there was so much conversation intermixed with the instruction. Very often, indeed—a quaint method of imparting musical instruction—the master was not present at all ; nevertheless, the effect on all parties was as though a lesson *had* been given.

Corinna's rich voice was, however, often heard during these occasions.

"Oh! I could listen to your singing for ever," would say the young man; "there is a tenderness and tremulousness that goes to the heart. You must sing that, 'When through Life,' again. That was one of the first songs I ever heard you sing."

"How well I remember that night," said Corinna, her hands dropping from the piano. "I was so terribly nervous. All those strange faces looking so coldly——"

"Not mine, surely. I wasn't cold, I know. But, of course, you never noticed me."

"O! I did, indeed I did. You seemed to feel for me, and I was wondering who you were."

"And who or what did you think I was? Some coxcomb, I dare say——"

"No," she answered. "You seemed to

me to have some sympathy. Yours was the only face in that crowd that I felt was with me."

Now there will be many who will consider this young lady to have been a low, artful young creature, angling according to her lights, in an inartistic way, for a young man superior to her in station, and doing her part with goodwill in this little conspiracy for entrapping a young fellow. Yet this would be an unfair judgment. She really liked—or fancied that she liked—this young gentleman, and felt the emotions which she so naïvely expressed. After all, there is no such prodigious harm in struggling to reach a higher station, and the same struggle is repeated in all ranks. As in revolutions, it is success that constitutes the legality.

The young man was indeed, for the time, hopelessly entangled. There was

something even romantic in Corinna's position—a candidate for the stage, and votary of that charming art where all is aristocracy—the queen of song—the HEROINE! Even the surroundings were lit up with some of that radiance. Braham Nagle, under less paternal conditions, would have been contemptuously pronounced a mere vulgar fellow, and all his fine speeches so much ill-bred familiarity. The homage of the family would have been insufferable. But a celestial moonlight illuminated all.

Shall it be confessed there was another motive working, of which nearly all the parties concerned were unconscious? This was the young gentleman's vanity. In time all these rapturous commendations began to bring conviction. Were a stammerer assured, a thousand times assured by many voices, that he was a consummate orator, he would at last begin to put faith

in it; and the plainest of women might even more readily be convinced that she was but an hour or so's time behind the official beauty. It was amusing to see how soon Mr. Alfred came to give forth his rather rude notes with a bold confidence, to listen critically, and himself vouchsafe criticisms which were received with astonishment and delight.

They were the most charming people in the world, indeed, he repeated with authority to his friends; and when any joking remark was made on Mr. Nagle's mind or manners, he put it by, or put it down with a grave authority, as though he were entitled to speak, and was in the family confidence.

"Nagle," he said, "was a man who had seen a great deal of life, and knew more than people imagined. Few men had more experience, or had been trained in a

better school; he had been knocking about with Braham, Grimani, and all that cultivated set. He had had many pupils; and was altogether a remarkable man."

People wondered as they heard this justification, and wondered more as they saw the confidential relations of the parties increasing every day and every hour.

CHAPTER VIII.

A GRAND SCHEME.

A GREAT scheme was now on foot. Braham Nagle's CONCERT was in every one's mouth!

Every one had joined in the natural speculation as to the musical merits of the Nagles. The natural answer was, "Give 'em an opportunity of hearing you!" It was Billy Gardiner that was most eager with this idea.

"It is all very well," he said; "but people must see and hear you in the flesh. We must have you out on the platform,

and Miss Corry, too. Why, her splendid voice would fill St. James's Hall, ay, and fill it well! There's our new Brickford Rooms, all ready and finished, and it would be a fine opportunity to give a concert."

Braham Nagle greatly inclined to the idea. This was, indeed, seizing the Brickford populace en gros, instead of laboriously nibbling at them retail. It was a superb idea, and should be carried out magnificently. He at once proceeded to organise his plans.

Indeed, everything was favourable to the prospects of the family. Among the Brickfordians was the usual number of young fellows who, after singing "Let me Kiss Him for his Mother," or for some other person, at a supper-table, discovered they had voices, and were eager to display them on more auspicious platforms. There was a larger class, with lusty, rasping

voices, that loved chorusing the "Messiah" and such classical works, and who delighted in toiling through the heavy loam of oratorios; honest hodmen, who were content to stand in great herds, and rasp out "The glo-ho-ho, ho, ho, ho, ho—ry-hi-hi-hi-hy! the pow-how-how-her!" for hours together.

Here was material suited to Braham Nagle, taking them as being worth five shillings apiece, at the least, and all for what, as the professor would say—"for standing in rows and dividing the wave of a stick among them." Here were the makings of a Philharmonic, Harmonic, Anacreontic, Polyphontic Society, or whatever orthodox name you would be pleased to call it by.

However, these plans were all in the future. Now, there was to be thought of the great enterprise of the concert which

Mr. Nagle had taken in hand so enthusiastically. No prime minister could appear to have more upon his mind. He was all day planning and rehearsing. With a special view to the occasion, he had, as it were, issued an Order in Council re-establishing the HARMONIC MATINEES, which society, however, did not proceed beyond that abstract constitution. The concert, it would seem, was given "in connexion with Mr. Nagle's Harmonic Matinées," as though that society had already been the means of training up a vast number of executants, who would lend strength to the performance; but the truth was, that though the society was so far called into existence, it was innocent of members. Still it was a good word to conjure with. Musical education was in as raw a state at Brickford as its new red brick; and though there were plenty of pianos ordered as a

necessary and ornamental article of furniture, still the mere "Shot drill," as Mr. Nagle called it, "of our old friend Doremi-fasol," would be but an unsatisfactory contribution to a musical entertainment. Mr. Nagle, therefore, felt that he must chiefly rely on his family resources, and on the assistance of a friend or two. After all, it made but little difference; for, as his ardent supporter and canvasser, Bill Gardiner, observed, the chief point was to dispose of all the tickets beforehand, and secure the cash.

"All you want," he added, "is to get the people together. Once they were seated, any meats and dishes would do."

Allusion had been made to the assistance of "a friend." It will be guessed that this contribution included aid from Mr. Alfred Duke. The young man cried out

in surprise at the notion, when Mr. Nagle made his communication, but was delighted.

"*I* sing in public! Why they'd all laugh at me! Nonsense, my dear Nagle."

"Your aid will be invaluable," said the other gravely. "Your voice may not be of the strong, roaring tamber, like that Boanerges, the gigantic Simms! I won't go so far as that; but it is a nice gentlemanly organ, and my little part in its training, I must say, has done marvels. It would be an advantage to me, I confess, to exhibit such a clever pupil. But I know you will——"

Mrs. Nagle, in an humbler fashion, murmured her entreaties.

"Corinna—my *own* child," added Mr. Nagle with emphasis, "I will let *her* sing; but *that* is no matter."

Corinna, strange to say, did not join in this appeal. She thought her admirer's

gifts scarcely equal to so conspicuous a trial, though they pleased in a drawing-room. He was again surprised. But there was a plentiful stock of male vanity to be appealed to, which, by perpetual praise and enthusiastic bursts of admiration, had been fanned into a greedy flame, and accomplished what Mr. Nagle's arguments would have failed to do. Nor must it be supposed that these people were mere crafty schemers, deceiving this young fellow with their flatteries and feigned admiration. They were so pleased with his partiality for their family, that everything he did seemed admirable, or at least "nice," and even in the family "bosom," Mr. Nagle found himself enlarging on the nice gentlemanly pleasing way in which his young friend "sang his little song." It was therefore carried unanimously that Mr. Alfred Duke was to be brought forward. Reports

were duly sent abroad that Mr. Nagle had "a new barytone" in hand, and ready to come out. Mr. Gardiner was the most active in magnifying the importance of this project, and went about propagating the news, as if it were some piece of state policy.

"I can assure you," he would say, "this is going to be a tip-top affair. Nagle has discovered a mine of music in this young fellow's voice. The great Boanerges, he says, whoever he means, will be nothing to him. Gentlemen, you know, now take to this sort of thing, provided, of course, they have the material, and, I am told, are drawing their thousand a year at the Italian Opera—so Nagle tells me."

So, indeed, was Nagle fond of telling, with other romantic legends of the kind. Mr. Gardiner had even, after infinite difficulty, succeeded in persuading his quaint

relative, Old Doughty, to attend, and had got him to take some tickets.

Meanwhile, "the rehearsals" went forward at the Crescent; that is, Mr. Duke was to be found there practising, morning, noon, and night; that is, again, sitting, or talking in the window with the enchanting Corinna, while Mr. Nagle sat at a sort of extemporised bureau, buried in papers and tickets, writing despatches, as it were, and, as he said, "worn to the very grave." Everything was going on magnificently, and a very fair amount of cash had come in. But the sanguine papa looked forward to the great night as the certain occasion of another far more important event, and fondly hoped that the amorous youth, dazzled by the brilliancy of his success, would bow down and lay love and fortune at the feet of the enchanting Corinna; though it must be stated that the young lady herself

was not nearly so advanced in his views, would have been fairly content that matters should go on as they were for an indefinite time, and found the whole a very pleasant state of things indeed.

It may be confessed, too, that in this view she was seconded by the views of the young gentleman himself, into whose head the idea of marrying a singing-master's daughter, never seriously entered. There was no deliberate heartlessness in this notion; he really believed that this exhibition of devotion and admiration for so handsome a girl, coming from a well-born and noble gentleman, was sufficient compliment, and that this *admiration* would be all that the trusting girl would require. Had any one reasoned seriously with him on the subject, he would have put aside gravely the idea of marrying. "They are sensible people," he would say, "without

the sheer folly you give them credit for. They like me; I like them. It is a great pity there are so many busy people in the world who insist on forcing everything between hard and fast lines. One can have warm friendships, I suppose, without thinking of marriage?" He felt very scornful in this view of his, and even took a pride in impressing it on some wondering friends.

It was now come to a day or two preceding the momentous one of the concert. Mr. Nagle was seated in his drawing-room at the Crescent, engaged in the delightful task of revising the proofs of some large posters that had just come in. The family were all about him, while Mr. Alfred Duke, almost blushing, surveyed his own name in vast type for, perhaps, the first time. These were to adorn the walls in various public places. A copy of the document is supplied in this place:—

BRICKFORD HALL, BRICKFORD.

MR. BRAHAM NAGLE,

Of the Metropolitan and Brighton Concerts, Director of the Harmonic Matinées, Author of "The Dying Swan," &c., &c.,

Begs to announce his

FIRST GRAND CONCERT,

In which he will be assisted by the following Artistes:

MRS. BRAHAM NAGLE

(Of the Metropolitan and Brighton Concerts),

MISS CORINNA NAGLE,

and

ALFRED DUKE, ESQUIRE,

Of the —th Du Barry's own Hussars,

Who has kindly consented, for this occasion only, to assist the Bénéficiaire, with his gifted organ.

PART THE FIRST.

Prayer—Mosè in Egitto. ROSSINI.
Mr. Braham Nagle, Mrs. Braham Nagle, Miss Corinna Nagle, and Mr. Alfred Duke.

Duetto Buffo—"Chio Sono." SPELUCCI.
Mr. and Mrs. Braham Nagle.

Solo—The Death of Nelson. BRAHAM.
Mr. BRAHAM NAGLE.

*** The song will be given strictly, as sung by the immortal Braham himself, and as taught by him to his favourite pupil, Braham Nagle.

Solo—In this Old Chair. BALFE.
(By particular desire.)

MR. ALFRED DUKE,

—th Du Barry's own Hussars.

"Oh, but I say," remonstrated the young man, "look at the size of the letters in which you have put my name! Why, the people will laugh at me."

"Not a bit too large, amigo," replied the reader, confidently, "the 'caps' are just right."

"If the caps fit I suppose I must wear them," said the young man, gaily; "but I feel convinced I shall make an ass of myself."

"Hush!" said Mr. Nagle; "let us proceed now to

PART THE SECOND.

Duet—Love me! ROBINS.

Miss Corinna Nagle and MR. ALFRED DUKE,
—th Du Barry's own Hussars.

A regular cooing duet; thirds all the way through up to the avenue, when we put the spurs on, and you canter up to the door in grand style. Oh, to have heard the

way the imperishable Braham and Kitty Stephens warbled and trilled it again—it would have done you for breakfast and dinner and supper for a week!"

It will be evident from the cast of the programme, that Mr. Nagle intended to make his daughter's admirer as conspicuous as possible, and the astute musician felt that the singing of an amatory duet in public was not such a bad way of setting the public tongue agoing. He, Mr. Nagle, at the instrument, the young pair nervous and faltering, Corinna fortifying her companion by encouraging whispers, and coming to his rescue even, *must* awaken a softness, an emollient tenderness in the youth, which might lead to the happiest results!

But there were dangers in the way, "Breakers ahead," as Mr. Nagle called them. For who could suppose that at the

very moment that the happy party were enjoying the feast of anticipatory glory, an interruption should have come of the most disagreeable sort ?

CHAPTER IX.

AN UNWELCOME INTRUDER.

MR. NAGLE had the great poster open before him, with Mr. Alfred Duke's name in the conspicuous "caps." Mr. Nagle's own letters were vast and black. Mr. Duke's of a staring red. Mr. Duke was before him in an attitude of docility, his arm on the back of Corinna's chair, an attitude most grateful to the paternal eye.

At this crisis the door was opened, and a figure stood before them—Lady Duke!

The confusion may be conceived. Bandits surprised in the act of dividing their

booty could not have been more disconcerted. The image may seem unpleasant and perhaps unfair: but had any one suggested it to Lady Duke, she would there and then have thought it happy to a degree.

"I could not have believed it! I actually saw these things," she said, contemptuously, pointing to the placard, "on the walls—on the common walls of the town. It is disgraceful—and I cannot suffer it!"

"My dear madam!" began Mr. Nagle, a good deal confused, "it is merely a little music—we wish to bring forward Mr. Alfred here——"

"Bring forward!" she repeated, with a disgust that spoke volumes, "but I do not blame you—but you," she said, turning to her son. "I blush to think that you would allow our honoured, and your father's, name to be hawked about, and stuck over the

walls like some of *the common strollers that go round the towns.*"

Mr. Nagle started and coloured. The friend and pupil of the imperishable Braham to be classed with common strollers! Yet he did not know what to answer.

"It is simply ridiculous—not to be thought of. The people here, I find, are talking of this intimacy, against which I set my face. It is right to let you know at once that nothing can come of it. If you are wise, you will let the thing alone. You are all very clever, no doubt, in your profession, but this sort of thing never does. Neither I nor his father will tolerate it. And as for having a son of mine exhibited for money, such a thing is not to be endured a moment!"

The young man, colouring and indignant, interposed. "Mother, what is all this about? what can you be talking of?

You shouldn't, really. These are friends of mine. It ain't fair."

"No, it is not fair," said the lady, unconsciously amending the phrase of her son, "to have our name hawked about in this style. I never was so disgraced in my life. But it must be put a stop to. I suppose you will not allow these people to prevent you showing respect to your mother's wishes? Perhaps you will come with me now?"

"Certainly, mother," said the young man, with deference. "But I can assure you, you are unjust to Braham Nagle and his family. They have had nothing to do with this, beyond being good enough to find that I would be of some assistance to them in their concert——"

"Exactly," said the lady, scornfully; "they could persuade you into believing that you had a voice like Mario. Your

weak and foolish vanity could swallow any flattery of that kind."

This was a weak and foolish speech on the part of so worldly-wise a lady. The young fellow was nettled and mortified.

"Mother, you don't understand much about music——"

"I can assure you, my lady," interposed Mr. Nagle, with his most engaging and emollient manner, "that it is an organ of the greatest capability, and with dew care Mr. Alfred——"

At last Corinna spoke; she had been writhing under the humiliation of this scene. To see her relatives treated after what Lady Duke—a coarse woman—would have styled "the dirt of her shoe," entered into her very soul like hot iron!

"Papa! papa! I implore you, do not debase us in this way before this lady! Let her go, and let her take her son, who

esteems us so little that he can allow us to be insulted in his presence in this way. Tell her, papa—since he will not—that it was not we who sought him, but he us. She saw with her own eyes, the very first, how he distinguished me with his attentions. For shame! It is an unworthy and unbecoming attack to be made on us by a lady, who does not disdain to come to our humble lodgings——"

"I came for my son, madam," said the visitor, trembling with rage; "but I do not choose to enter on any discussion of the matter with you. So you must excuse me, please. Now, sir, perhaps you will give me your arm."

Young Mr. Duke cast an imploring and helpless look at Corinna. But he was awed. Without a word, he did as he was bid, gave his mother his arm, and left the room with her.

The unhappy family were left with the great staring poster spread out over the table: all, it was but too probable, that would be left of that young man's aid and intimacy.

"Such treatment!" said Mr. Nagle, blankly, after staring ruefully at the crimson letters of Mr. Alfred Duke's name. "Was there ever! Really quite uncalled for."

Corinna's eyes were still flashing.

"Uncalled for! Strike his name out! I am ashamed of myself to have put any trust in him. Oh, papa!" she added, covering her face, "*what* a life of mortification."

"But the expense and trouble," added Mr. Nagle, taking his own view, "and the bother one has had listening to him. It will ruin the whole affair. You don't know how to manage these things, child;

you should not have spoken to the woman the way you did. You mismanaged the whole business."

"I am right glad of it," said Corinna, pacing up and down. "We have done with them for ever! But to have been so deceived in one I thought generous and chivalrous!"

"He is a mean cur," said Mr. Nagle, in a sudden fury. "I always thought so, and always said so. But I should like to know who's to pay for these posters where his trumpery name figures?"

There was some sense in this question, though it made Corinna almost writhe. It was a wretched state of things. The family were plunged in despair. Mr. Nagle's spirits sank lower and lower, until he declared that music was the most infernal "stone-breaking" plague that had ever come upon the face of the earth; that he

would sooner a million times "have been *put to scraping ships' bottoms*"—at the best an extraordinary trade to select, but it must be pardoned to him in his state of excitement.

Corinna paid no attention to these jeremiads, until the mother, the former soprano assoluta, and a lady who, in her husband's judgment, had no pretensions to sense, suggested that, after all, the young man did not mean to throw them over, and that it might be a pity to break off with him all at once.

"I'll never speak to him again," said the young lady, vehemently, "never!"

But this view of his wife's seemed to strike Mr. Nagle, for he presently was saying that after all the boy might be "more led than said"—whatever that expression meant—when suddenly a knock came to the door, and the faithful maid of the lodg-

ings rushed in joyfully to report that Mr. Alfred had come back, and was below!

A smile of triumph rather than of satisfaction lit up Corinna's face. The rest of the family discreetly withdrew, and left her to meet the visitor.

Mr. Duke entered with a downcast air.

"I know what you must think of me," he said, "and I appeared weak, and even mean; but you don't know—you can't understand how I am situated."

"But I do know, I do understand," she answered with a quiet scorn. "I am bitterly disappointed. I, who thought that you at least would not have deserted me."

"What *is* a man to do?" he said, impatiently. "You can't go against your family; and after all, though I would have liked to have sung and helped your concert" (it was only fair that after the family

had laboured so hard to persuade him of the value of his organ, he should adopt their convictions and turn their compliment against them), "still it does not do, you know, as my mother says, to have one's name flourished about in these dreadful things"—and he pointed to the unlucky posters—"especially where money is taken at the doors."

"You are right," said Corinna, after a pause, "it does *not* do. It does not do that persons in your condition should come down to our level, and associate with a poor music-master and his daughter. At least, not for them. It was you, recollect, who came to us, who forced yourself on us, and it seems cruel to put this mortification upon us. To be spoken to—treated in this way—as if we were some——"

Here Corinna's eyes filled up with tears of mortification and grief; her voice choked,

and covering her face with her hands, she burst into a torrent of sobs.

Of course, Mr. Duke was beside her in a moment, soothing, and ardently protesting.

"I would do *anything* sooner than wound you, dear, dearest Corinna. But I *can't* do this. I dare not. At home they have everything in their power. I must not offend my mother. She has made this a point. I should be utterly ruined, if——"

Corinna had recovered herself. She was now ashamed of her weakness.

"Quite proper. At last we understand each other. But you should not have behaved as you have done. You should have thought of the mortification, the humiliation you were bringing on us. All I beg and stipulate for is, that you will leave this place, or leave us, at once. Any more such experiments would be too costly

and dangerous for us. You must honourably help us in trying to forget that we have ever known you. Promise this. It is the only way you can make up for the injury you have done."

The young man looked hurt and injured.

"Give you up altogether—not come and see you again! You fancy these things can be done as easily as——"

"As easily as removing your name from that thing there," she answered, pointing to the poster. "Yes, it can be done. You shall see it. We have pride and self-respect, which shall not be trifled with any more. Good-bye! and go away as quickly as you can from this place."

She moved to the door, where she stood for a moment. No dramatic heroine ever seemed to him more brilliant or magnificent. He rushed to her.

"Oh, Corinna!" he said, "if you ask me, if you put it to *that*——"

"If!" she repeated, her flashing eyes making his droop. When he raised them again she was gone. He waited some moments, then went away, and hurried down the street, vehemently talking to himself.

CHAPTER X.

A NEW ALLY.

THIS little incident soon got abroad in Brickford. It was a delightful piece of excitement, and people began to take sides in the matter. Every one knew that Lady Duke had come back to rescue her child; indeed, the success of her attempt could be read in the downcast, rueful faces of the family. Still she had not gone away. But, alas! it was well known that the faithless youth had fled from the place! The scene over the posters had somehow

transpired. Still, the general desire to see the deserted songstress on the public platform assisted the sale of the tickets.

The whole was canvassed in the keenest way, Mr. Duke having "behaved infamously" according to some; but, according to others, it only served the whole party right. But these were the views of ladies chiefly, who from a distance admired the noble youth. Mr. Nagle bore himself through the streets and other public places with the demeanour of a martyr. But he made no alteration in his proclamations — "'Twas too late — the thing must stand or fall as it was." Mr. Nagle seemed to reckon that it would fall rather than stand, and with it all the fortunes of his house, and looked forward calmly to seeing the venerable Broadwood again in peril.

But the gallantry with which Will Gar-

diner took up the cause of the injured family was remarkable. He was obstreperous in his condemnation of the scurvy behaviour of his relative to a fine girl. "I declare," he said, "I could not have believed that Alfred could have turned out such a pitiful skulker. She's a deuced deal too good for him." The only thing to be done now was that all should strain every nerve, work heart and soul to make the affair successful, and the concert a bumper.

With this view he burst into the room of his relative, Old Doughty, whom he found, with his violin, absorbed in the harmonies of the mighty Beethoven, or of some other master. An humble pianist of the town, such as Mr. Nagle would have described as "a mere stone-breaker!" was thrumming an accompaniment at the piano. Will interrupted both. He bois-

terously insisted that something must be done for the Nagles. The other gently remonstrated.

"You are interrupting us. I can help no one. No one has ever helped me through life."

"That's good from you," said the intruder. "Where would your fiddle be but for the help you are getting from our friend there? Do lay it down a minute and listen to me. It's really a very hard case."

In a very simple, natural way Will Gardiner began to pour out Corinna's story. He described the mortification, the humiliation of the poor girl, and the shabby, contemptible fashion in which her admirer had "left her in the lurch." She had the noblest voice. The family were all musicians to the back-bone. The girl had shown a brave spirit, and let the fellow go without a word. Now should not something be

done? Surely he, Old Doughty, knew plenty of "those German fiddlers who would come any distance for a pot of beer and a smoke?" Could he not get them down to fill up the programme?

Mr. Doughty listened without protest to this depreciation of the members of his honoured craft, but still was interested. Anything about music had an almost dramatic interest for him. Will Gardiner saw his advantage, and pressed him hard.

"If you only heard her sing—sing one of the melodies, or a thing out of a fellow called Gluck"—Mr. Doughty winced at the pronunciation where the composer's name rhymed to duck—"a song about Eurydice and Orpheus, my dear boy, it would make you escape from your very skin!"

"Ah! that's a song, indeed," said Mr. Doughty, with some enthusiasm. "Any

one that could sing *that*—but it shows taste to have selected it. And she sings it well, slowly, solemnly, mysteriously ?"

"Oh, I don't know about all that," said his friend. "But to hear her is enough to make you cry——"

"That *is* the reading," said the other, gravely. "But I am very busy now. Besides, you overrate my ability. I can do nothing for any one; I really cannot. I am not even a singer."

"Hang it! but you can listen," said the other; "let me bring her up here; it will do neither you nor her any harm. Don't be ungallant, man alive."

Thus did he urge the matter, and so obstreperously, that at last he wrung a wearied consent from the other, who was panting eagerly to recommence that interrupted adagio.

"I'll bring her in half-an-hour," cried the enthusiastic Will, rushing away.

In the same eager fashion he burst in on the Nagles, who were dismally engaged in their preparations. Corinna was woefully disappointed when he revealed "that he had got the very thing that would do for them all;" for she thought he brought what would be good news for her. Mr. Nagle received it calmly and dryly; he had a contempt for the cultivated amateur, whom he placed very low indeed in the musical hierarchy.

"It will do no harm," he said, "and it will be a civility to the gentleman. You may go, my dear. It shows a proper feeling on his part, and the more that rally round us the merrier and the better."

Corinna, rather from a wish to oblige her friend than from any other motive, put

her bonnet on, took her light roll of music, and set off with Mr. Gardiner.

They found Mr. Doughty tenderly bending over his viola, which lay in its case, and which he seemed to be brushing or patting like a kitten in its nest. No kitten could have been as snug as that instrument; for it lay nestling in a little bed of soft velvet nicely adjusted to its shape, with a richly quilted counterpane in which it was tucked up when put to bed. He raised his face as they entered, which seemed anxious as that of any mother.

"Busy with the baby?" said Bill, noisily. "Here, I have brought a young lady to see you. Leave that wooden child alone, and attend to the handsome living——"

Mr. Doughty's thin lips relaxed into a smile.

"Gardiner, you talk so strangely," he said, dryly. "Won't you sit down, Miss

Nagle? Very few ladies ever honour me with a visit."

He was looking at her with a shy and curious interest that really spread a light over his face.

"Oh," said Corinna, in her most natural way, "it was so kind of you to let me come, though I hear you are such a severe judge."

"Dear me, no! What nonsense the people fill their heads with! Indeed I confess to liking good old music, and some of the new, and can fairly judge of that; but as for pronouncing on the style of singing and playing pursued by the young ladies of the day, I confess I am utterly unfit for it. I know nothing about it. They neglected my education."

Corinna's speaking face told that she was a little mortified. He saw it. "Not that I doubt that you are one that I shall like.

You do not look like one of those who sit and work at their piano like factory girls at their frames. You have a charming musical face, suited to your name, Miss Corinna."

"'Pon my word, Doughty," cried Will Gardiner, "well said. You have done wonders already, Miss Corry. He doesn't speak that way to his fiddles."

"What is your favourite song?" said Old Doughty, calmly ignoring this tone of his friend. "You do not sing those confectionary ballads—I am sure not?"

There was still that softness and shyness in his manner which, with him, was quite unusual.

"No," said Corinna, eagerly, "not for the world! I dislike them as much as you do. I brought this—what I like to sing myself—though it is not as popular as it ought to be—that scene from Glück's Orpheus."

"That shows taste. So far so good. Even if you sing it badly, Miss Corinna, I shall say you are a musician."

Will Gardiner, afterwards recounting this meeting, declared that the old "Old Doughty," with all his dryness and cantankerous flavour, seemed to float away, while a soft, gracious, human-like being appeared to take his place. His voice, he said, became insinuating, his eye gentle, and he seemed altogether youngish, if not young. Further, "Old Doughty" said, in a hesitating way :

"And if you would not mind, I should like to accompany you."

"You are not the first that has said that to Miss Corinna—ha! ha!" broke in Will Gardiner, boisterously.

Corinna accepted eagerly, and the connoisseur, placing himself at the piano, began the sort of dejected symphony that heralds

the song. His fingers, small and delicate, were those of a gentleman, and touched the keys with a graceful though not powerful touch. Then Corinna began. She drew herself up, and poured out her rich full tones, telling the fine story with a feeling worthy of the gifted Viardot herself. As she proceeded, the cold face lightened, and was turned to hers: the delicate fingers became firmer in touch: the two performers, reacting on each other, produced a result that kindled the enthusiasm even of Will Gardiner, to whom these severer efforts were usually unintelligible.

"You do sing," said "Old Doughty," warmly, "and you are an artist!"

"The song would make one sing," said Corinna, enthusiastically.

"It is noble and genuine, the truest expression of the situation. I tell you what. You are going to have this concert. You

must sing this, and if you would allow me, I should be delighted to hobble after you with the accompaniment."

"Well, well," thought Will Gardiner, "what is coming to the man! He can't be in love with the girl of a sudden. Old Doughty is not weak enough for that."

Corinna was not a little flattered at this testimony to her gifts. But there was something which Mr. Doughty was not aware of, and this lent the dramatic impression. "What shall I do without my Eurydice?" ran the words of the song, and these were poured from Corinna's heart. For she was thinking of how cruelly she had been deserted, and how the sad wail was exactly in tune with her own heart.

Other pieces of the same classical kind were then attempted. Never was there a more delighted audience.

"Yes," said Old Doughty, now as eager as he had been before cold. "We must try and give a classical tinge to this concert. I could telegraph to the Steiners, two splendid violin players, and have them down by to-morrow night. We might have one of Haydn's quartets."

But Corinna bethought her of her father, who looked more to popular than to classical music. Then there were the posters.

"Oh," she cried, "papa has chosen what I am to sing—it must be something light and taking."

"What?" asked Mr. Doughty.

"Oh, the 'Dying Swan,' and——"

"What, one of those vulgar ballads?"

"No, no, not vulgar," she said, colouring; "it is very effective and tuneful."

"Never mind, we shall settle all that. I'll see him myself. Going? Well, I hope to see you very often. You have a

noble voice and a noble style. And your face so reminds me of—of old days! Well, good-bye, Miss Corinna."

Mr. Gardiner and his companion went their way.

"I declare, my dear, you have quite thawed Old Doughty!"

CHAPTER XI.

COLD WATER.

WHEN Corinna and her friend arrived to report progress, and while Mr. Gardiner was descanting loudly on the success of their mission, Mr. Nagle listened with scarcely concealed indifference.

"Corinna brings about that result very often, I can tell you; but, of course," this sadly, "no one ever thinks of asking, 'who set the types?' But that would never do, oh never! Glück is well enough at the Monday Classical Sawpits——"

"The Sawpits?" said Will Gardiner.

"Yes, you know what I mean—where they grind old fogey music—rasp up and rasp down—all grave as undertakers, working as if they had saws and planes in their hands." Then confidentially, "There's neither tune nor money in it, sir—no money in it."

"Oh, indeed," said Mr. Gardiner, greatly impressed.

"As for your friend Doughty, he is, no doubt, a creditable amateur. But, my dear sir, all the amateurs in the empire, boiled down and melted together, wouldn't be equal to one of the trade. It's all poor, my dear sir—wants the real beef."

"I see," said Will; "there's no money in them."

Still, these were strange doctrines to come from Mr. Nagle, who only that morning had enlarged to Mr. Duke on the sur-

passing excellence of the amateur : " *You* have, my dear boy, what we have not, a grace, a refinement, &c."

He went on : " As for getting down any German scrapers, I wouldn't do it—no, not if it brought fifteen pound ten more to the doors. It's well meant, I have no doubt," said he, graciously, " and if he likes to come here and make his little suggestions I see no objection."

That evening Mr. Doughty actually presented himself, and was received with a kind of condescending loftiness. Mr. Nagle had, in truth, the greatest contempt for what he called the " starved old bachelor " class, who had accomplishments but little money. They were no good, in any direction, he said ; did not want lessons themselves, rather preferred giving them ; and had no daughters or sons to whom " instruction could be imparted."

The truth was, Mr. Nagle's musical erudition and acquirements had once been signally exposed by one of these gentry, and the outrage still rankled in his breast.

As for "the German scrapers," he put them aside after his own fashion. "It was a very nice thought; but the Haben sie business doesn't do."

Mr. Doughty was glancing at the posters still displayed on the table. "You don't mean to say you are going to put a young lady of her talent to sing rubbish like that, Dying Swans and such wish-wash nonsense?" and he pointed with his stick to the obnoxious ballad.

Mr. Nagle coloured. "Wish-wash, sir! As good judges as you, sir, have pronounced it first class. Ay, and may be better, too, sir."

"And perhaps worse, too," added the

other, dryly. "No offence. I have not heard the music, so none can be meant. But, I entreat you to do something in the interests of genuine music! Give your daughter some chance of distinguishing herself, and don't profane her noble voice and herself by such things. Do something for art, and don't quite turn it into a tradesman's business."

"Oh, my good sir," said Mr. Nagle, impatiently, "don't teach me, pray, at my time of life; I am a little beyond that. No, we really can make no alteration in the programme. It must stand."

"But you know it is altered already, and does not stand," said the other quietly.

Corinna's eyes flashed, she drew herself up. Mr. Doughty saw what he had done, and actually coloured.

"I did not mean——" he said, his voice actually faltering.

"You did not mean?" said Corinna, slowly.

"No, I did not," he said in a low voice, "so far as you were concerned. I am a dull and stupid solitary. However, as I may not help you, I must go."

"I am exceedingly obliged to you all the same," said Mr. Nagle, loftily; "but really I tell you frankly, you could have been of little use to us."

"I am inclined to agree with you," said the other, dryly. Then turning to Corinna, "I wish you would do that for me. I do not like the idea of genius like yours being profaned by flimsy ballads. It's immoral," he said, almost vehemently. "I would not see your beautiful robe trailing through the dirt for the whole world."

Certainly, this Old Doughty was a very strange being, and Corinna looked after him, wondering, as he left the room. He

took his way home rather thoughtful and silent, and when he entered his rooms did not visit his violin in its bed.

Next day one of Will Gardiner's stock stories at the houses he visited and to the people he met in the street and elsewhere, was the sudden change in Old Doughty. The man, he said, was transformed, the girl was a witch. Had he not always said there was a secret charm about her? Any girl, of course, knew enough of her trade to captivate the young fellows; but to soften a seasoned bit of timber like that, was a miracle. She was a perfect enchantress; and mark his words, one of these days, "she would snaffle a lord." Old Doughty had warm blood in him still, and he declared he began to respect him, now that he had shown that he could admire a fine young woman like Corinna. He wished the old bachelor had

a couple of thousand a year, and they could easily get up a match between the pair. At all events, he would go and ask him to dinner again, and tell him that he had behaved like a man. This caused a good deal of amusement among the Brickford folks. But all this while, Will Gardiner never lost sight of the main point, and forced his tickets on the people he met, as a conjuror would force his cards.

Notwithstanding the defection of Mr. Duke, who was pronounced by Mr. Nagle, in sad tones, to have shown the cloven hoof, the concert promised well. Nothing was more gallant or heroic than the bearing of Corinna, who, when confronted by curious female eyes in the streets and other public places, met their gaze with a haughty composure, though her heart was filled with mortification. Everywhere was repeated the news that the faithless lover had suc-

cumbed to maternal influence, and that both had quitted the town. The lady had retired in triumph.

The night of the concert had now come round, and everything promised exceedingly well. A handsome amount of tickets had been disposed of. Mr. Nagle was not to be spoken to, and seemed to be marked "dangerous." His eyes, as they encountered other eyes, peered into a mist of tickets or audience beyond; of ordinary mundane things he seemed now to have no ken. He was spurring down to the rooms every hour, and appeared overpowered with a weight of business. As the hour for beginning drew near, at least two or three private carriages—for Brickford did not possess more—came driving up; and the large room, showing its staring white and circular gallery, standing propped on attenuated legs, like an old sideboard, gra-

dually filled. There were reserved seats and stalls, and what Mr. Braham Nagle described, with infinite disgust, as "the mere shilling canaille." Yet a good many of these obnoxious places were being secured with alacrity.

Now the performing party was dressing at their lodgings for the exhibition. An anxious moment—the fly waiting at the door—Mr. Braham Nagle investing his neck with a stiff George-the-Fourthian white neckerchief. Corinna was in the drawing-room ready-dressed, her music before her. She looked like some stately high-born maid. Her hair was bound with a simple golden fillet—magnificent hair it was—and, pale and scornful, she seemed like some inspired Grecian poetess. A thousand emotions were working within her. She was "heartsore," as her father would have said, chilled, but not crushed

by the desertion of her admirer. She knew the cruel ordeal that was before her—they were too poor, she felt, for her to enjoy the luxury of dejection or despair; she had determined to stamp out all that was left of feeling; and on that night, at least, wipe out mortification by a triumph. With this view she formed a bold resolution. She *would* sing that song of the deserted Orpheus, wandering hopelessly desolate, Che farò senzà Eurydice. Into that lament, at least, she would put her whole soul. As for such ballads as even the "Dying Swan," she felt that she dare not attempt them. Her soul recoiled from such things. Were she to attempt them she knew she would fail ignominiously; in such stuff she could find no food for triumph.

And it must be added, that she felt a wish that she should win the respect of one strange and critical being in whom she felt a sort

of interest. In the ante-room of the concert-room, just before going on, she would tell her father what she had determined upon. She was a devoted and affectionate daughter; but on one or two occasions, when the family honour or dignity was concerned, had made a firm stand, which he had been unable to resist. She was looking forward with exultation to that triumph. The deserter should hear of it afar off, and should learn that she had not been left a mere helpless, crushed, and deserted thing. He should learn that——

As she paced up and down she hardly heard the maid of the lodgings, who had repeated twice that some one wished to see her.

It was a gentleman. It was Mr. Alfred Duke. Here he was rushing in, eager, penitent, ready to cast himself at her feet!

CHAPTER XII.

RECONCILIATION.

A FLUSH of joy spread over her face. But she recollected herself, and drew back from his extended arms.

"It was cruel, pitiless, unkind," she said, in a low voice. "You cannot repair it by this."

"I will do anything—whatever you wish!" he exclaimed, passionately. "I have been wretched ever since. I have come back to you, and have left her. Say what you wish, and I will do it."

"Sing at our concert, I suppose," she answered, with ineffable scorn. "A great concession. You are most gracious, indeed."

"But you know not what I have passed through to come here. They will never forgive me at home."

"It is I who cannot forgive," answered she, coldly. "It did not cost you much to leave us. I tell you frankly, I almost felt contempt for you as I saw you led away: and when a woman feels a contempt for a man, *you* know—. You say that you have suffered, but what has been my state ever since, exposed to the humiliating remarks of the people whom I am to face to-night?"

"What *can* they say," he said, eagerly, "when they see me beside you? Those who laughed will be triumphantly refuted."

"No. I do not want it. I cannot con-

sent to it. One such trial is enough for me. I cannot risk another."

"You cannot help it," he said. "I am here now. They will all see me here to-night, at your feet, sitting in the front row, worshipping, drinking in every note, looking at you. There will be no mortification in that for you. I am the one that will suffer, at home. Come, you can't be so cruel to me. Let us be happy for this night, at least."

Corinna was softening a little. She could not be *very* angry with this repentant prodigal, for whom in her heart of hearts she had some love.

Entered at this moment Mr. Nagle, rigid and creased in his Georgian neckerchief, who gave a start as he saw the truant returned. He called up a frown. But the beaming face of Corinna showed him that all was right.

Mr. Nagle, as it were, clasped him in his arms.

"My dear, gallant young friend," he said, "this is simply noble! But I think it is time we should be at the rooms. The fly is at the door. We can give you a seat—eh?"

The truth was, the music-master was so filled with the excitement of his present enterprise, and the prospect of his own personal glories, that this little affair of his daughter's had become quite a minor concern. The young man did not much heed this carelessness. There was a delightful excitement abroad. Paradise appeared to be opening before him, and the past was forgotten.

But another figure had now joined the party; Mr. Doughty, violin-case in hand, was standing in the doorway. Mr. Nagle turned on him impatiently.

"Well, my good sir, what is it now? I am in a great hurry."

Old Doughty's eyes were fixed with a curious, anxious look on the pair; an almost angry look. He walked over to Corinna.

"Have you thought over my little plan? I have been dreaming of it ever since. It will be a great opportunity," he said, "and you will carry them all by storm. There is the song—I have transposed it. It will suit your voice to perfection."

Corinna was embarrassed and distressed. Matters had entirely changed. She had no object now in seeking to wring her lover's heart, or to make an exhibition on the platform.

"I am afraid, Mr. Doughty," she said, gently, "we must give that little plan up. Papa has settled everything, and will not have his programme altered."

"I see," he answered, in a hard, bitter

tone. "Pray make no excuses. I see it all. This gentleman has returned. He is to exhibit himself, and music, everything, must give place. It is only one illusion more gone. I suppose this gentleman will be put forward to sing his little ballad——"

Mr. Nagle interposed somewhat roughly.

"My good sir, you seem to me to be interfering. You are going a little too far. This gentleman is a most particular and warm friend of ours, who has behaved in the most chivalric style. I really can't suffer these sneers. It is not becoming."

"Quite right," said the other; "I had no business to interfere. I have brought this all on myself. Perhaps you may be a little sorry for this. It is not for me, of course, to say so, but you may see your mistake; it may be, before the night is over."

With these singular words, Mr. Doughty

disappeared, leaving his hearers not a little astonished.

"A poor creature," said Mr. Nagle, with pity; "a *very* poor sort of creature; lives in a small, hungry way, I am told, which makes him eccentric. Don't mind him, my dear fellow. Let us be going now, or we may be late."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CONCERT.

THE concert now began. The wonderful Nagle family, as was to be expected, appeared under all the forms and conditions set down for them: Mr. Nagle being conductor, leader, accompanist, solo singer, duet singer—being off and on, and speech maker. There was no reason why the performance should not go on in the order set down in the bills; but the entrepreneur, or Enterprenner, as he sometimes styled the office, was perpetually coming forward in express

style, as though he had just received a telegraphic message, to make a little speech such as :

" Ladies and gentlemen, it has become necessary to solicit your indulgence for a trifling change in our programme. We shall, with your kind permission, take the ballad now, and postpone the duet, thus transposing the two pieces. I trust that this little departure from the order set down will not be visited with your disapprobation."

All of course applauded loudly. But Mr. Nagle did not then retire. He had a few more words to add.

" I may take this opportunity of stating that the song which comes next but one in our list, namely, the *never-dying* 'Death of Nelson'—if I may use the expression—will be sung precisely as its lamented author, the immortal Braham, sang it—

in the presence of the PRINCESS CHARLOTTE!"

The name of this royal personage impressed the audience, and extorted applause.

"This interesting fact, I felt sure, would be received with satisfaction by the intelligent audience whom I have the honour of addressing; and I may take this opportunity of adding, that no more accomplished artist, or more kindly, less puffed-up being, ever drew the breath of life than the late Mr. Braham, at whose feet I had the honour of sitting in early life, imbibing such feeble musical talent as I may possess."

It was really a treat to hear Mr. Nagle chanting the lamented but glorious end of England's hero. He had the whole platform, orchestra, desks, &c., to himself, an assistant having previously entered and

removed the large upper portion of the piano, so as to let the fullest volume of naval sound escape. The singer entered slowly, with sorrow, and even gloom, on his features. Then seating himself, he shook his head mournfully, and allowed his fingers to stray about the keys in a wild fashion, while his eyes were fixed on the ceiling. Presently he nerved himself for the effort, and struck up the triumphant strain with which the well-known ditty is inaugurated. He seemed to be on the quarter-deck, declaiming about the glorious conflict; and when he had finished each detail of the story, he dipped his head down low for long, confidential communication with his fingers. But when he reached the record of the hero's fall, and minor wailing chords, the whole story might be read in his agonised face. A simple accompaniment of the piano was

all that was required, but his dramatic instinct had supplied an artful addition. A drummer had been placed in ambuscade, and signified the fatal shot by a startling stroke on his instrument. The stagger of Mr. Nagle was really dramatic; his bewildered stare in the direction of the murderous gun told his emotion. There the whole story of the admiral's bleeding wounds might be traced; the voice faltered; the fingers, like tottering limbs, feebly limped from note to note; the sounds seemed to choke in his throat; all the woes of England seemed to be borne on his sorrowing head. This, however, was relieved by the triumphant fashion with which he proclaimed the issue of the glorious day—the noble confession of the mother country that every man that day had done his duty—had done his d'yewty!

All this pantomime was new to the

audience; indeed, it was not generally known that Mr. Nagle had once been prevailed on to come forward at the Brighton Theatre on the occasion of a friend's benefit, and had sung the stirring lay in the costume of a British tar, his neck comparatively bare, collar confined by a slender ribbon, flowing trousers, &c.

Mr. Nagle noticed during the night that the audience seemed to be not a little distracted from his efforts by something "in the body of the hall," as he phrased it. One disturbance was of course owing to the presence of that gallant prodigal, Mr. Duke, on whom all eyes and opera-glasses were concentrated. There he sat in a stall in the front row, and when Corinna came forward to sing her song, there were but few who followed the young lady's performance, most of those present eagerly watching his enthusiastic face. But

another incident which rather distracted Mr. Nagle was the sort of interest that attended Old Doughty's proceedings. During the interval between the first and second parts, quite a group was gathered round that gentleman, who seemed to be receiving what seemed to be congratulations, and which he accepted languidly. Presently Will Gardiner came round to the artist's room overflowing with triumph, and roaring out a cataract of "splendid," "grand," "carrying the whole place by storm," and the like, having, too, his arm in that of Mr. Doughty, whom he led in obstreperously. The latter went up to Corinna a little timidly.

"You are singing superbly," he said. "I shall have to leave this to-morrow morning, on business, so I shall not have an opportunity of speaking to you again. You have real genius, which might be

developed and made to do wonders. But I see you do not care for my advice, which you think very old-fashioned."

The gentle heart of Corinna had felt some pangs at the unceremonious way in which this person who had shown such a kind interest in her, had been treated, and answered eagerly :

"Indeed, I have been wishing to tell you how much I feel your kindness, but in all this flutter and excitement I was hasty. You must consider that I have others whose wishes I am obliged to follow."

"Perhaps so," he answered, hastily. "But I wish you to know this. Circumstances now may allow me to be of use to you—of great use, perhaps—that is if you would permit it, and——"

At this moment came up Will Gardiner, leading Mr. Nagle.

"Just look there, Nagle. There's the lucky man of the day! Why Crœsus himself will be a pauper to him."

Mr. Nagle started, and looked round a little wildly. Crœsus! What? How?

"He has a telegram in his pocket at this moment, worth—how much would you suppose? What would you say to two hundred and fifty thousand pounds?"

"Gracious Heavens above us!" cried Mr. Nagle, as naturally as though he had heard the house was on fire.

Will Gardiner was right. The great news was out, and it was known just before the concert began: an old club friend, who had made money in India, and who had lived a bachelor life like himself, was dead, and by his will had made Old Doughty his heir to some vast amount! From that moment Old Doughty was to be Old Doughty no more. He was to be young

and handsome, interesting, influential, authoritative, and ceased to be eccentric.

It was astonishing what a change was produced in all parties by this piece of news. The fortunate inheritor stood there, the centre of all—a sort of social king, prophet, commander. Had he chosen to do so, he had only to signify his desire that the concert should cease and the listeners disperse, and Mr. Nagle would have come forth on the platform and promptly made an announcement to that effect. But the distress of that gentleman was really comical. What a blunder, he thought, had he committed, throwing cold water, literally in tubfuls, on such a worthy gentleman and his good-natured offers! He had all but insulted such a kind friend. What infatuation! But it was not too late. With some hesitation he suggested, why not have something classical—that noble

thing of Glück's for instance, which the classical taste of Mr. Doughty had suggested?

The deep look of humiliation and reproach in Corinna's face, and her exclamation of wounded pride, "Oh, papa!" checked the further statement of the proposal. Mr. Doughty smiled with good-humoured contempt.

"Never think of that now," he said to Corinna. "I shall not recollect such things. I know the world pretty well, and can make allowance. But your friend here," he said, noticing Alfred Duke, who was looking on rather ruefully at a distance, "are we not to hear him to-night? Surely after his coming such a distance, and making such sacrifices, that is a privilege with which we might expect to be favoured."

There was a spitefulness in his manner, as he looked towards the young man, joined

with a sharp dislike; and the latter returned his look with interest. But now it was time to recommence the music, and the whole party left the room to return to their seats.

When the performance was over, it was understood that Mr. Nagle would give a select little supper to a few friends up at the Crescent. Thither repaired Will Gardiner, and his brother the parson, young Duke, and Mr. Doughty; the latter, hitherto overlooked and neglected as an obscure being, of no account whatever, finding himself the distinguished guest of the evening. The host's position was one of some embarrassment; but he contrived to extricate himself with much dexterity on the ground of candour, plain speaking, and of having incurred the eternal enmity of his child. "I know I shall be in Corry's black books for ever and aye. But Mr. Public is a

terribly low fellow, and we have to feed him on what you, my dear Mr. Doughty, justly term garbage. Garbage, sir, musical garbage, sir, is the only thing that goes down nowadays!"

Mr. Doughty found himself somehow placed beside Corinna, but that young lady, to her father's annoyance, was cold and reserved. All, however, were in good spirits, save Mr. Duke, whose great sacrifice, defiance of his family, etc.—which seemed to him the grandest, noblest, and most heroic act in the world—appeared now to be accepted tamely, and quite as a thing of course. Indeed, there was room for no one else but the centre figure. Every one felt more or less under a sense of constraint in the presence of the shy and modest person who was yet in possession of such a sum as two hundred and fifty thousand pounds. Will Gardiner, who was

as liable to be depressed as elevated, was gloomy, for he felt that, with his large family and not over-abundant resources, he had cast away a great chance in not having persistently devoted himself to Old Doughty. His clergyman brother was also a little distrait, possibly thinking of this goose with the golden eggs which might have been flapping its wings, as he thought, in his private farm-yard. The evening was therefore marked by constraint; though it must be said that Mr. Nagle gave way to his good spirits, told anecdotes of musical interest, and with a boldness that all might admire, but find hard to imitate, ventured to propose the health of one of the most consummate amateurs breathing, and whom they had at that moment among them—a man with the true soul for music, and whom his musical guide, philosopher, and friend,

the late immortal Braham, would have been proud to take by the hand.

Corinna listened with pain to these compliments, and treated the object of them sitting by her side with fresh coldness. Will Gardiner also looked on with a sort of suspicion and gloominess. His brother, too, the clergyman, did not appear to have much appreciation for Mr. Nagle's jests.

The party broke up early, and the festival was to be marked by this singular phenomenon. The enthusiastic Will Gardiner, who had worked so hard for the Nagles, entered his own house moodily, and in reply to a question of his lady's, as to how he had enjoyed himself, declared that "He was sick of that mountebank Nagle, who was a knowing schemer, who would try and do them, if he could." A sentiment that not a little mystified his wife and family.

The sudden good fortune of Mr. Doughty might seem something in the nature of a coup de théâtre. But when the facts were known, there was nothing so very surprising in it. Old Doughty, as some may have guessed, was one of those who suffer from the injustice of the public; the world being always too busy to take the trouble of separating what is accidental from what is genuine, and being apt to fasten upon outward peculiarities and eccentricities, as if they represented, without doubt, the real man. He had, however, as we have seen, fallen in with a retired Indian official, who "scraped" a good deal (as regards time and friction, though not as regards excellence and skill) on the 'cello; who, during many years of harmony with the German assistants, had learned that in this thistley husk lay a kindliness, a charity, a chivalry even, of which at first

he had had no conception. When this Indian fell ill, Old Doughty nursed him with a tender interest and devotion until he was completely restored. This old gentleman was a little eccentric: lived in a quiet, unostentatious way, and among persons who knew nothing about him. He had no relations. Though he had a rich friend, a musical amateur also, whom everybody considered sure of succeeding to the inheritance, not one of the friends who "fiddled" with him dreamed that he possessed so enormous a fortune. And when his death came, no one was so amazed or confounded as Old Doughty.

In Brickford, the great news devoured the exciting event of the Nagle Concert. The intelligence became known in the rooms before the concert had begun, and a prodigious interest excited. There was quite a buzz of voices. The spare

figure, and the intelligent, rather worn face, bent with a devotional adoration towards the classical face of the heroine as she poured forth her lay. "The Nagles have got him! The Nagles will get him!" was the whisper oftenest whispered in the hall. And there was in consequence a decided revulsion of feeling against the bénéficiaire. Two hundred and fifty thousand pounds connected with that professor-like little man—it was incredible! But, as we have seen, he had already cast his old skin, and was there before the ladies of Brickford a beautiful and engaging young man.

He was gone in the morning by the nine o'clock express. He was attended to the station by "that scheming Nagle," who blessed him many times—and in the loudest tones—as the train moved away from the platform. Will Gardiner came to the Cres-

cent during that day. He was thoroughly genuine, and could not conceal what was in his thoughts.

"Doughty seems to have taken a fancy to Miss Corinna; but you musn't reckon on his marrying. She ought not to give up the old love, who has given up so much for her."

"Oh, I don't know about that," said Mr. Nagle, loftily. "It would be a very poor thing for a girl of her talents and prospects. The young fellow has quarrelled with his parents. That's not the sort of thing that will do for us, you know."

"Why, God bless me, man alive," said Will, in a burst of warmth, "you are not going to play shilly-shally with your girl's affections in this style! You are not going to fly her like a hawk, at every sort of game!"

"I scarcely comprehend you," said Mr.

Nagle, "and the expression is scarcely appropriate. Game! Who is talking of game?"

"Ah, Master Nagle, you haven't gone round the towns, or sat at the feet of the imperishable Braham, as you call him, for nothing."

All this was merely in the nature of quiet skirmishing. But when it was known that Mr. Nagle was selecting a handsome furnished house, acting under instructions from his friend—a house where there was to be a large room to serve as a music-room, and was bustling about "ordering in things," the disgust of the Gardiners could not be restrained. This spacious apartment, Mr. Nagle hinted, would be the scene of the future Harmonic Matinées. Such a slight rankled in the mind of Will Gardiner, who again and again bewailed his own stupidity in not having made more

of their relation when he was not so prosperous; though it must be said that his wrath was excited not so much against Mr. Nagle as against Corinna, whom he now considered to be one of the most dangerous, crafty intriguers in the world.

Meanwhile Mr. Duke was behaving in a curiously uncertain fashion. He could not bring himself to go away, and yet while he remained he affected a careless indifference and dignity. The change in Mr. Nagle affected him in the most mortifying way. That gentleman wore a certain good-humoured indifference, which contrasted oddly with his former empressement and almost nervous eagerness to anticipate every humour of the young man. Now he seemed to convey the idea, "I am really too busy to attend to you." It was infinitely humiliating. Nor did Corinna supply what was wanting in her sire. She

could not understand this affected indifference and carelessness, and was too proud to let her real thoughts be seen. Perhaps she felt, too, that this change of fortune prevented her from showing the gratitude and regard she owed to the rich stranger who had been kind to her.

In a fortnight Mr. Doughty had returned, and was established in his splendid new house. It was handsomely furnished ; the music-room had been fitted up superbly, and a magnificent grand piano, with all the latest improvements, had made its majestic appearance. A small platform had been set up at one end of the room, on which the instrument, with two or three music-stands, was placed. All these arrangements were carried out under the personal superintendence of Mr. Nagle. It was amazing, with the pressure of so many pupils, how he found time for these pursuits ; but in the

cause of friendship surprising sacrifices are often made.

Mr. Doughty was duly installed, and very soon the horny sounds of fiddles proclaimed to Brickford that "Music, heavenly maid," was on active service. Anon the sounds of a piano were heard, and a German gentleman or two, with Corinna presiding at the grand, discoursed that most refined and dignified of earthly performances, a chamber trio or quartet. No matter what the surrounding circumstances, be they squalid or otherwise, if the second violin be some poor threadbare executant out of a transpontine theatre, and the pianoforte player some poor drudge of a music-master at one and sixpence a lesson, and the scene itself a garret, still there is a kind of ennobled air over the whole; the sounds are royal, and, as we listen, the humble roof and walls seem to pass away, and give

place to the panelling and decorations of imperial palaces.

Corinna, who loved music, and to whom such music, separated from vulgar trade purposes, was a novelty, sat enthroned at the Grand, her fingers majestically travelling over the ivory keys, her graceful figure bending over, while her classic head moved in time to the melodies. Of course Brickford put its own interpretation on these meetings. This artful young person was simulating a musical enthusiasm for the purpose of captivating the wealthy amateur. So constant was the attendance, so assiduous his devotion, that the town looked on the whole thing as settled beyond redemption, and decided that the scheming party of musicians had "got him," and made him their own.

These discussions naturally reached Mr.

Duke's ears, and he became more fretful than before.

But by-and-by Lady Duke had returned to watch over her son, who was so infatuated that he could not be drawn away from the vicinity of the charming siren. Of course she had come back to the commercial city for purely maternal interests, which ought to have commanded the sympathies of all mothers at least. But somehow this belief soon came to be discredited, more earthly motives were imputed presently to the matron, mainly, it must be said, owing to the boisterously-expressed opinions of Will Gardiner.

"My lady has an eye to Doughty's money-bags. That's what has brought her back. I know the woman well. She says she's a distant cousin, or something of the kind, though she always snubbed the poor fellow—and wouldn't walk the same side

of the street with him. She thinks people can't see through this sort of thing."

As to the relationship, Mr. Gardiner certainly did her injustice, for she was nearly connected, after a sort of second cousinship, with Mr. Doughty. Indeed, the families of Gardiner and Duke were all thus allied. Only a few weeks before they would have made this bond, so far as it concerned Mr. Doughty, as faint to the eye as the edging of a light cloud ; now, curiously enough, they would have had it as stout as a ship's cable.

The truth was, that Lady Duke was a person who had sunk all her capital in "floating" a financial enterprise, namely, the marriage of her two daughters, and had succeeded with one, only, however, to find herself comparatively embarrassed, and with limited means. This is often a curious delusion with such fashionable speculators,

who, when they have succeeded in their aims, find that they have only left themselves poorer in purse and affections. One of her daughters having thus taken away a modest portion, her son being expensive in his tastes, her own tastes and habits costly, she was but ill-furnished to encounter difficulties; and already old debts and coming obligations were pressing on her. The danger, therefore, of her son's marrying "a low girl without a shilling," filled her with a natural consternation, and with this, and other difficulties on her hands, it was not surprising that she should think of coming to Brickford to watch over her offspring, and cultivate the acquaintance of her newly-enriched relative. This intriguing lady had, in fact, laid out already a daring and comprehensive design.

The young person who was still "on Lady Duke's hands," and who was now to

be devoted to the conquest of Old Doughty, was at a finishing school at Bath. Orders had been already sent to put on extra workmen, as it were, so that the "finishing" should be accomplished with all speed. Miss Perkes, the principal, was instructed to have the musical "hands," in particular, working double tides, so that when vacation time came round, which would be within a short time, she would be ready to take her part creditably in the grand combined assault, which was about to be made on the newly-made rich man.

The young lady's name was Emmeline, and, it will be seen, was duly fitted for taking her part in this honourable competition. For competition it really was about to be. Almost insensibly a crowd of candidates were getting ready. Mr. Nagle had determined that his Corinna should win. Mr. Gardiner, though his candidate

was not more than fifteen or sixteen, determined, in an indistinct sort of way, that the prize should be somehow secured for their family. While the clergyman, whose numerous children were all too small to hope for any reasonable chance of success, still looked wistfully to the same object, and thought that he had a reasonable claim to a share in the emolument; and thus the whole group at Brickford were about to be absorbed in an exciting rivalry, which it was probable would have a serious effect on the relations of all parties.

A suitable house had been secured for Lady Duke, who brought her servants, carriage, &c., and every article that belonged to her, save her husband, who had to attend to his military duties. The siege was about to commence in earnest. Her son was confounded at the sudden change, and perhaps a little piqued at the indiffer-

ence with which his own affair seemed to be regarded.

"Don't for goodness' sake offend those singing people," said this worldly lady. "There is no harm in a flirtation with the girl if you find amusement in it. But you must see that we ought not to offend these people. There are excellent reasons for it. You showed your good sense in not exhibiting yourself on that platform. There is no need to push matters so far as that."

The young man was pleased that he was not "to have any bother" on this subject, and repaired with ardour to the feet of the enchanting Corinna, who seemed now to have quite restored him to favour.

CHAPTER XIV.

SKIRMISHING.

EVERYBODY in Brickford kept vowing that Mr. Doughty had not only grown young, but was growing younger every day; and indeed there was a brightness in his face and bearing, an excitement, a general interest in the world about him, which took at least ten years off his age. The acidity had worn off; his manner had become gracious and genial. He was talkative, gay — amused others, and was amused himself. It was declared (by the matrons), with

enthusiasm, that "if he had not a penny in the world," he would still be a charming man, to whom they would be delighted to give their daughters. What an exquisite taste was his—and so refined! And how nicely he touched that curious instrument—what was it called?—the viola, giving it quite an individuality. Then the piano. To hear him accompany; what a treat! How he helped that girl through, who had not such a wonderful voice after all. *There* was the only blemish—one slight speck upon the sun. There was something really absurd and unbecoming in this infatuation for a singer's daughter; though, of course, it might be only due to a pure love of art.

The position assumed by Mr. Nagle, however, was what mystified people most. That gentleman seemed to be installed altogether on the premises. He sat in the

study, at a secretaire, permanently, as it were, conducting correspondence, arranging the business matters of his friend, sending off telegrams, overlooking accounts, and performing all sorts of mysterious duties, which seemed to suggest his being at the head of some great counting-house. He seemed to look on music as wholly a subsidiary matter. Meanwhile the enchanting Corinna played away in the great music-room, lighting it up with her presence, filling it with her inspiration, and gradually helping to work that mysterious change in the wealthy owner of the establishment which had caused so much remark in Brickford.

It came to pass that during one of these practices the door suddenly opened, and Lady Duke presented herself to pay her first visit since her return. Mr. Nagle was at a desk in the corner writing despatches,

Corinna was enthroned at the instrument. The music stopped abruptly. The situation was a little embarrassing, but Lady Duke was equal to it.

"Now don't stop, don't stop," she cried, in a sort of anguish; but they did stop nevertheless. Behind her entered her son.

Corinna rose up with a haughty dignity, while Mr. Nagle coloured.

"I insist on your going on, my dear Mr. Doughty. You must not mind me. I wouldn't for the world interrupt your fine music." The fine music, however, had been interrupted. The performers perhaps felt that the temple was, as it were, profaned, and the charm gone.

Mr. Doughty received her coldly. "So you have come to stay here? A curious place to choose. I mean," he added, "for a lady with such tastes as yours."

"You may say that, but I declare to you it is the only place in which I have found health. What with Doctor Meiklejohn and the air, I really quite forget my neuralgia."

Mr. Doughty laughed good-humouredly. "After this," he said, "physicians will be ordering their patients to smoky Brickford, as they would to Nice or Arcachon."

His eyes had followed Corinna, who had moved disdainfully away to the window, where Mr. Duke had attended her.

"And your son," he added, in a hard tone, "does *he* also suffer from neuralgia?"

Lady Duke laughed loudly.

"You dreadful creature, how you see into everything. But can you wonder? She *is* such a charming girl! I frankly own I was prejudiced against her at first, but I have really grown to admire her

spirit. She has conquered me in spite of myself."

This was said in a frank, genuine fashion. Mr. Doughty looked at her doubtingly.

"If you knew her," he said, "or allowed yourself but the chance of knowing her, you would see—you would indeed see how worthy she is of all admiration. I have never met such a character."

This was like a blow in the midriff for his hearer; but she assented with extravagant cordiality.

"So Alfred thinks," she answered; "why he worships the very ground under her feet." This was a return blow. "He is literally infatuated about her, and I really fear that he is prepared to go any lengths."

"And disgrace you and your family! Such a discreditable alliance would corrupt the blood of the Plantagenets."

"No, no, my dear sir. You, of course, as a man of the world, see that generally marriage between persons of different stations is unsuitable. But, of course, when young men come to a certain age, and when," added Lady Duke, slowly, "they are bent on taking a certain step, why then the only duty of a parent is not to offer unreasonable opposition. In fact, we must make the best of what is unavoidable."

Again Mr. Doughty's eyes wandered over to the window, where the young people, so much interested in each other, as to be unconscious of who was looking at them, seemed to confirm the lady's view. It was proof of Lady Duke's assertion. What she said shot into Mr. Doughty's heart like an arrow, and the clever woman of the world in those few moments had created for herself a connection with this

newly-enriched being of a more important kind than the relationship in blood which she claimed with him.

She then passed over to Mr. Nagle, who, fuming in wounded dignity, affected to be completing a heavy correspondence.

"I was delighted," she said, "to hear that all had gone off so charmingly. And I have been wishing to see you, to thank you for the way in which you acceded to my wishes about Alfred's singing. I heard how you refused to allow of his appearance, and must say it was most delicate and gentleman-like on your part."

Mr. Nagle coloured with pleasure, though startled at this unexpected version of his behaviour. He actually hurriedly tried back in his memory to see what had taken place, and to his surprise found that he *had* been careless as to Mr. Duke's appearance, and that his Corinna had vehemently

opposed it. It was lady-like and condescending in Lady Duke to make such an acknowledgment. Still, some rather blunt expressions had been used, and language certainly contemptuous had been addressed to him.

"Your daughter, I fear," she went on, reading his face, "thinks I was a little hasty the other day. I own it. But you must consider a mamma's feelings, and poor Alfred, you know, would have made a sad exhibition of himself. A mother, you know, could not bear to see her son break down."

Delighted Mr. Nagle called out enthusiastically to his daughter:

"Corinna, come over here. Lady Duke wishes to speak to you and explain——"

The haughty look with which Corinna turned round at these words! The no less scornful air with which she commenced a

stately march across the room, and fairly confronted the lady.

"My lady was kind enough to mention that—er—little affair the other day, and to appreciate the step she was compelled to take. It is most good of her ladyship, Corinna——"

"What, on the day she entered our house, and spoke to you—to us," said she, with flashing eyes, "as if you were the meanest serf in the world——"

"Oh, hush! I say nonsense, girl!" said Mr. Nagle, excitedly. "You don't understand. Serf indeed!"

"With all my heart," said Corinna. "Be it so. But let no more be said of that scene, for it crushes me with humiliation even to think of it." And she swept away across the room.

Mr. Doughty was listening with wonder and unconcealed admiration.

"This is becoming quite melodramatic," said Lady Duke, laughing. "But," she added, turning to Mr. Doughty, "I know what I shall do. I shall make my son Alfred intercede for me."

Again a sort of nervous spasm passed across Mr. Doughty's face. Corinna was a strange girl. It seemed as though she delighted in purposely tormenting the man who showed such a deep interest in her. It might be hard to analyse this feeling. Perhaps she still wished to show him that, in spite of all obligation, she was determined to retain her independence.

Lady Duke then resumed.

"Do you know what I came here to-day for? I am going to give a little party, with good music afterwards—really good, and I want you, my dear Mr. Doughty, to help me. I am sure Mr. Nagle will lend us his talents; in fact, I would be glad

if he would undertake the entire direction."

Mr. Nagle was enchanted. He would help in *any* way that her ladyship thought necessary.

"Of course your daughter is out of the question—I would not ask her for the world, unless, indeed, Alfred can persuade her."

"Don't let your ladyship be disturbed," said Mr. Nagle, soothingly, who had latterly assumed quite a free and familiar manner that contrasted oddly with his former obsequiousness. "She is a child, the merest child. Here, come here, Corinna——"

"Hush," said Mr. Doughty, warmly, "you surely would not do such a thing. You cannot force a high spirit to undergo such a degradation."

Alfred Duke and Corinna had now come over.

"Degradation," said he, "for Miss Corinna Nagle. Who wishes to degrade her, pray? What singular ideas you have."

"You talk ridiculously, Alfred," said his mother. "I was only hoping that Miss Nagle would sing at our party."

"Which Mr. Doughty thinks would be a degradation. Absurd!"

"Don't misinterpret what I said," replied the other, his voice slightly trembling. "Perhaps we might have meant that *you* once thought it a degradation to sing at Mr. Nagle's. Malicious people in this place may have put that very construction on your refusal. It had all the look of it."

The malicious, too, looking at the almost vehement tone with which this speech was delivered, might have assumed that he entertained the bitterest dislike to the man to whom his words were addressed. Mr. Duke, though ordinarily considered a "cool

hand," was rather taken back, and a mortified look came into his face.

But Corinna turned on the speaker with something like indignation.

"Mr. Duke hardly deserved that speech; you know very well it was not his fault if he could not keep his engagement," she said, quietly.

This was all; but the speech had a curious effect on those listening. Over Mr. Doughty's face passed an expression of pain and positive anguish; over that of Lady Duke one of anxiety. Mr. Duke was triumphant. In short, it was the presence of jealousy, dislike, and the feeling of success.

When he was alone after the scenes of this day, alone in his large music-room with his grand piano, Mr. Doughty paced about restlessly.

"I cannot fathom her," he said, im-

patiently. "She is amusing herself, mocking me, torturing me. Only for this wealth that has come to me, perhaps all would have been well. But let her not think she can amuse herself with me, as women like to do. My secret is in my breast still, and she shall not have the triumph of finding it, unless I have hers!"

CHAPTER XV.

MR. DOUGHTY'S CONCERT.

A PARTY of singers was being led round the country by a musical "farmer," whose posters flamed on the dead and living walls of Brickford. Of the company were Signora Scamperini, of the Italian Opera; Mr. Boomersong, modestly described as "the greatest of English barytones;" a young lady who brought round a couple of what are called "royalty songs," "Patty so Shy," and "Half My Heart," both by Blue Bell, whose fame in fitting such trifles had tra-

velled through the length and breadth of the land; Herr Borlowski, the famous 'cello player; Monsieur Piquette, the no less famous violinist; and Mr. Ryder Baker, as accompanist, conductor, and soloist. These artists were to give two grand concerts of vocal and instrumental music. But more interesting was the news that the whole party was to attend at a soirée given, regardless of expense, by Mr. Doughty, and where, of course, it was supposed that Miss Corinna was to be prima donna. Mr. Nagle, indeed, triumphantly told his friends that the whole was for Corinna's glory; that Jenkinson, the famous opera house manager, was coming down on a visit to Mr. Doughty, and was to pronounce on her merits as a singer. The wealthy amateur was now in such a position, that any reasonable wish of his was certain to be attended to, so that the realisation of an

early dream of Mr. Nagle's—his daughter figuring on that brilliant and blissful stage as Signora Naglioni—did not seem so far off after all. The Nagles had fallen, not so much on their feet, as people round them were fond of saying, but, it seemed, on a vast expanse of ottomans and down cushions. The preparations were under the sole direction of Mr. Nagle, and everything of the handsomest and richest had been ordered in. Workmen were seen covering in a portion of the garden, which was to be fitted up with rich furniture and costly shrubs got down from Covent Garden; in short, "everything that money could do"—which, after all, often does so very little, as regards taste and effect—was done.

The musical farmer and his musical farm stock had already arrived, and here was the night for Mr. Doughty's entertainment

come round. Every one of position in Brickford had been asked. Lady Duke had constituted herself a sort of Almack's patroness of the affair, and had even good-naturedly proposed to officiate as hostess —much as great ladies in Rome are accustomed to do at the house of some illustrious cardinal—a proposal which, to her surprise, was coldly declined.

Her daughter had been sent home from the finishing school, "finished" in due time. She was a handsome, showy-looking, large-eyed girl, not in the least shy, yet not bold, but with a comfortable absence of delicacy which would make her persevere in her ends, matrimonial or otherwise, without being in the least daunted by a rebuff, or, indeed, seeming to be conscious of one. Her mother and herself, though their official services in reception of the guests had been declined, had, with a

force not to be resisted, contrived to introduce themselves on the premises during the daytime as decorators and arrangers. Their good offices, not to be avoided by anything short of direct expulsion, had been indifferently accepted by Mr. Doughty, though both declared that Mr. Doughty "must leave everything to them," and concentrate all his thoughts and exertions on the musical department. But they now began to see, with a certain ruefulness, that the whole festival was in honour of the enchanting Corinna, and their instinct warned them that on that very night some final and decisive step fatal to their cherished designs would be taken. And what chiefly disturbed Lady Duke was the suspicious manner of Mr. Nagle, who had grown curt and blunt in his manner of a sudden, and made several attempts to dislodge her from the premises.

Lady Duke, when she came down from dressing, was thoughtful, and felt there was a great responsibility on her. She found her son waiting, and noticed that he was a little nervous and excited.

"This is going to be a great night," she said. "Mark my words, Brickford will have something to gossip about to-morrow."

The young man understood her, and asked her, eagerly: "What is it you know? Have you heard anything?"

"Oh, I have had my eyes and ears open all the day. Those Nagles are very clever, very—regular adventurers; not, of course, your Corinna. But, in her innocent guilty way, she has led on the gentleman in excellent style."

"You don't understand, mother," he said, with an air of superiority. "I know her far better than you. Her father forces her to do all that——"

"What, after being in the man's house morning, noon, and night, strumming away at his piano with his fiddlers! No, no. There is no forcing *her* into it. And, indeed, a girl of her sort is not to be blamed. She must make the best of such a fine chance."

"I tell you, mother," said the son, "you are utterly wrong. She would not look at Old Doughty."

"And I tell you, Alfred, you don't know the world."

But now the carriage was announced, and the party went down stairs. On the road Mr. Duke was silent; like most young men, he was overstocked with vanity, and would really have sacrificed anything to prove that he was irresistible de par l'amour. No one knew this better than his worldly parent, who, for that night at least, had determined to play a rather

risky game. So convinced was she that Mr. Doughty would propose that night to Corinna, and be accepted, that she had resolved on the desperate extremity of interposing her own son, so as to gain a little delay, and trusted to her ingenuity to rescue him later.

The rooms at Mr. Doughty's presented the most brilliant appearance. They overflowed with the "cream of the cream"—the "blue ruin," Will Gardiner called it—such as it was, of Brickford. The large music-room had been laid out with rows upon rows of chairs, filled with the wealth and fashion and beauty of the place. There was abundance of the first, not much of the second, and very little of the third. The platform was framed in a perfect garden of shrubs and flowers, and the music seemed to issue from a sort of bower. Every one agreed that the whole was done

magnificently, and in perfect taste. But "Old Doughty" had been lately boiled young again in a golden pot, with more success than attended on his mythological predecessor, and taste and gallantry and magnificence, as we know, are natural accompaniments of youth.

But they saw his quiet, thoughtful face lit up with the brightness of happiness as he led Corinna to the place of honour at the top of the room. There was a pride, an exultation in his eyes, and some ladies vowed he looked positively handsome, though "candidates," as they might be called, looked grim, and wondered "at the boldness of some people." Yes, there must be a proposal that night. Otherwise, who could submit to be led up in such a style, before all that crowd. Certainly on that night our heroine looked a perfect princess, and Mr. Duke, surveying her progress,

watching from afar off her flushed cheek and the pride of her cavalier, bit his glove and stamped his foot impatiently.

The people about, who knew him by sight as well as they did the market cross, were looking at him with curiosity, and, as he fancied, with enjoyment, to see "how he took it." All this was infinitely mortifying and irritating. The spectacle of Corinna, thus followed with admiration and envy, led up by her devoted admirer, to be dazzled by such homage with all the splendours of wealth about to be laid at her feet, was too much for him. He was not a profound analyst of his own emotions, or, indeed, of emotions in general, and he set this feeling down to deep passion, and perhaps to jealousy. Perhaps it was the supremacy of his rival which amused, and was seen by, that large assemblage, that really disturbed him.

The "Squallinis"—so used Mr. Nagle to contemptuously describe the ladies and gentlemen of his own profession of the "assoluta" class—had done their work. The Italian signora had voiced a very difficult medley of "runs," trills, vocal leaps, which had about the same relation to true music as the steps of a prize clog-dancer have to the performance of a Cerito, when the turn of Corinna arrived. She came forward as composed as the Italian lady, but with a grace and dignity perhaps foreign to the nature of that artist. Her beautiful and classical face was lit up with a true inspiration, an expression very different from that of the artificial gymnast who had preceded her. But what a flutter went round the audience when the spare figure of Mr. Doughty was seen at the pianoforte, and his delicate fingers began the sad symphony of the solemn strain in

Orfeo. Then her full rich voice, charged with feeling and passion, was lifted up, and floated in melodious waves down to the end of the room, making even unmusical senses vibrate with a strange sympathy. There was the tenderest grief and sense of bereavement, the most wonderful dramatic feeling. The whole scene was brought before them, without scenery or stage; the whole story was told by the noble music alone, and her expression. The Italian signora, listening with surprise, was biting her lips with a spiteful expression.

When it was over, and the last melodious tones had died away, a burst of applause spread in waves over the room. Corinna stood there a queen, an empress, as indeed she might have been for that timid adorer who was gazing on her with reverence and rapture. What did genteel Brickford think now after this recognition

and association in public? "Opera-house" Jenkinson, as he was called, was seen to go forward enthusiastically, and appeared to stream compliments.

Alfred Duke could endure it no longer. The next piece being a serious task, a heavy Mozart business—so many square feet of earth to be dug out within half-an-hour or so with musical spades and shovels—he found his way to Corinna's side, and after a whisper, led her away out of that crowded room to one of those improvised greenhouses where were scattered various pairs and parties for whom the music of their own discourse had a greater charm than the common crotchets and quavers. The Doughty eyes, though fixed on the Mozart notes which he was playing, strayed uneasily in the direction of the two departing figures. All through the easy progress of the allegro, the heavy ploughed

field of the adagio, and the pleasant asphalte of the presto, they were absent. All this covered a good deal of time, but they did not return. Anxious eyes looked towards the door; and at last the audience saw Mr. Doughty leaving the room.

CHAPTER XVI.

A DISCOVERY.

HE stood before the pair, and in a quiet, calm voice said to her: "You are missing all this good music. Will you not come back to the room?"

Corinna started up. Mr. Doughty looked from one face to the other with an angry suspicion.

"Will you come with me?" he said. "When they see such an artist as you absent, I'm afraid they will think the music I offer very poor indeed, and not worth listening to."

"You must obey him," said Mr. Duke, scornfully. "There is no alternative."

Mr. Doughty did not answer, but put her arm in his, and both walked away.

"I have interrupted you, I see," he said. "You were good enough to show a little interest in our performance. You gave some useful hints; yet you do not think it worth listening to on this great occasion."

"Do forgive me, forgive me," said Corinna, eagerly; "it was very stupid and thoughtless of me, and most ungrateful."

"Ungrateful," he said, as if the word jarred on him. "That is nothing. But thoughtless—ah! that means much more. *I* am not thoughtless where you are concerned. While you were engaged here, I was thinking of you. It is all settled. That is, if you wish it to be settled, you have but to say yes. Express your wish, and your next appearance can be on a

greater stage, in London ; or, if you desire it, you can stay two years abroad with the best Italian masters. Understand," he added, hastily, "and this with no obligation to me. If you enter into a formal engagement, you will be independent, and the means will be provided from your future gains. You know that if I could venture to do so I would offer all that I had in aid of such a plan ; but I dare not. At all events here is what you have wished for at last open to you."

She was in much confusion. "What will you think of me if I tell you that I have made up my mind not to enter on such a course of life ?"

"A very sudden change," he said, gravely. "But are you quite in earnest ?"

"I should not like it ; I feel no vocation for that kind of life."

"May I then tell you what I feel ?" he

said, eagerly. "That I am delighted to hear of this resolution! I never could bear the idea of one like you—so sacred in my eyes—coming out before crowds in tawdry dress and paint; but it was your wish, and what you decided on became ennobled. This, however, simplifies everything, and takes away a barrier. I fancied you were so devoted to your art, and to this purpose of the stage, that it would be idle—a profanation, indeed—to attempt to divert you from it. Now," he continued, with some agitation, "the time has come for me to speak freely, and say what has long been in my thoughts. Encourage me with but a word."

"No, no," said Corinna, almost passionately, "I implore you, not. You must not. You will only detest me, for you will think I have been playing a double part. Let everything remain as it is. Continue to

like me; but let me not lose your friendship and esteem for ever."

Mr. Doughty was deadly pale. He looked at her with eyes that seemed almost to distend. There was a long silence, but at last he spoke. Corinna's eyes were bent upon the ground.

"You seem to me to make too much of all this," he said with a forced smile, "and I dare say I understand you. But I shall do so more clearly if you will answer one question. What is the reason of this change in your views? Come, now, be frank and open with me—a poor foolish creature that has lived all his life in dreams and delusions, and is well nigh old enough to be your father. Come, speak," he added, in almost a peremptory tone, "I have a right to know this."

"How am I to tell you?" faltered Corinna.

"Something has occurred that has made you happy—very happy?" he went on.

"No, no," said Corinna.

"I thought so," he answered, with an effort. "And of course your kindly and well-meant caution to me is connected with such an event. Come," he again added almost fiercely, "I am surely entitled to some answer from you on these points; it is the least, after all, you can do for me."

"You quite misjudge me," said Corinna. "If you have any confidence in me, you will not assume anything now."

"Oh, I understand! Now, then," he said, "listen to me, and weigh carefully, I conjure you, what I am going to say. Do not suppose there is any selfish motive. I tell you, you are being led away by a shadow, by a phantom, more light and vapourised than any that has ever danced before a traveller crossing a marsh. I warn you of this—I,

who have been your devoted friend and worshipper—I mean who am so still, though you have deceived me cruelly."

"I have not, indeed. At least, I never intended it. But I have my pride."

"Then perhaps I deceive myself; that I suppose must be the truth. But think of my warning. It is not too late. I tell you as surely as I stand here, you will shipwreck all your happiness if you pursue the new course you have determined on. I know human nature, and man's human nature. You are deceived now, and will be yet more deceived."

Corinna looked at him steadily.

"I grieve to see that you do not understand me; but there is no remedy for that."

His lips were trembling.

"Mind, you have been warned. Do not blame me if you find yourself shipwrecked

in your peace and hope and happiness. Like all women, you have settled your heart on those whose hearts are not settled on you, and who only think of trifling with you. But it is only one more disappointment for me; that yours may not come later is my fervent wish."

There was something so bitter, and even hostile in his tone, in his tightened lips, that Corinna drew herself up and answered firmly—

"Now listen to me. I have answered you candidly and fairly. And let me say that there is no one else whom I would have allowed to question me or bring me to account. This was because I thought you had a genuine and kindly interest in me. Beyond this, I did not dream——"

"And you must not for the world dream anything else beyond that," he said, in a hard, sarcastic tone. "Your judgment was

perfectly correct. A poor elderly virtuoso would not think of anything else unless he were a fool, of course. I am elderly, but not a fool, I trust. But see, we are losing all the fine music ; people will be wondering what has become of us, and will be settling, as I believe some of the gossips have settled already, that some very serious matters are being arranged. Let us go back, or rather let me conduct you to your favoured cavalier, for whom, as I must conclude, you are making this grand sacrifice of a career. Now one word more. As you have made me your confidant in this matter, I am bound to aid you to the utmost, and you may really depend on me. I have been singularly unlucky in the one or two attachments I have had in my life, so I must indemnify myself by forwarding the interests of others. I promise you that I shall look after the favoured being in this

case on whose faith you have staked your happiness, unwisely, as it seems to my poor dull mind. I shall strain every nerve to make him act as one ought to do who has been honoured—Oh! by such an enviable preference!"

He seemed to Corinna quite to change as he spoke these words, which had a tone of menace in them rather than of friendly encouragement. She felt a little indignant, but took his arm without another word.

This night appeared to the gay and airy guests who were fluttering through Mr. Doughty's rooms, to be no more than some pleasant evening of amusement, like many others. But for the personages of this little piece it was one fraught with the highest dramatic interest. At many a ball and party and dinner, which to the average guest seems a mere formal show, some such strange drama is secretly going for-

ward—the course of true love running smooth or roughly, jealousy and rage rising rampant; disappointment, the certain ruin of to-morrow, or excruciating physical pains being hidden away under rippling smiles and agreeable talk.

There never was a girl so full of a strange pride as this Corinna; a pride made singularly sensitive by the position of her family. Where there was any unfavourable misconstruction of her motives or behaviour, she would never condescend to set right those who could thus misconstrue her. In another case, she would have swept away haughtily, under the impression that she had been treated with cruel injustice; but as she rose, the thought of all Mr. Doughty's kindness, the romantic interest he had shown in her, came back on her, and she put her pride away for a moment.

"After this, I suppose you will be quite changed to me," she said, turning to him. "I can see this plainly. But take care that there has not been a mistake here, a mistake that we may regret—that I may regret. You may find out too late that you have assumed too much."

"I have found it out," he answered, bitterly, "and am content. Pray, let me bring you back to your friend and admirer."

She did not say another word. They returned to the music-room. Lady Duke, sitting at the door, and eagerly scanning their faces, thought she read in them a full and true account of all that had occurred. Had her crafty scheme succeeded so far? In a moment she had secured him, and interposed her daughter.

"Emmeline is enchanted," she said, with a sort of rapture. "She never heard such music in her life."

"Yes, indeed," said Emmeline, fervently, "it is a new world to me; something like the *angels playing!*"

This was pretty strong, and the speech was overheard by Will Gardiner, who was never weary of repeating it. "Something like the angels playing! Did you ever hear anything like that?" He, too, had been watching the strange proceedings of the evening, and had kept wary watch on the parties.

"Well, Lady Duke," he said, in his bluntest style, "if the match doesn't come off after to-night, there never was love-making in this world. Miss Corinna might have her action against your son, and get heavy damages. Ha, ha! I declare, they would make a very handsome pair."

Mr. Doughty was standing close by, and heard this remark. So they could see by a sharp twitch which seemed to pass across

his face. It was as though some one had stabbed him. Mr. Will Gardiner's face, so honest and jovial, was now a sort of combination that seemed almost grotesque, of greed and vexation, that fitted badly with the old good nature. In a moment he had his arm in a most affectionate fashion about Mr. Doughty, who seemed to be fast growing back into "Old Doughty" again.

"'Pon my word, you have done this magnificently. And I can tell you, you have given your protégée a regular prestige. I want to tell you the Dukes, both mother and son, are taking to her fast enough. 'Pon my soul, I believe they think you'll come down with a fortune for the girl."

Mr. Doughty slowly withdrew himself. "Your compliments are always elegant from their heartiness," he said. "The arrangement you suggest would, I am sure,

be very pleasant for all the parties concerned. I have some interest in this clever young lady, and should be happy to help her in the way you propose. But I am hardly so sanguine as you."

"More in the style of Shilly-Shally," said the other, with a burst of genuine enjoyment. "Eh?" He was, in truth, delighted to see that "no harm had been done."

The concert dragged to its close. Mr. Doughty was the most painstaking of hosts, though many people remarked the old "dryness," which, in a more elderly man, would be pronounced cantankerousness. To compliments and congratulations he answered, with a half-sarcastic tolerance, "that it was very good of them to be so entertained by his exertions." Had not Miss Corinna Nagle excelled herself? He hoped, by-and-by, they

would all be hearing her in a very different area from that poor room. Her noble voice would fill an opera-house.

Lady Duke was the greatest lady there. So the host came to "take her in to supper." He approached her as she sat, the centre of an obsequious group. "We must go in to supper," he said. "But, first, where's mademoiselle? Ah! There's some pretty interesting work going on there. Master Alfred will have something to tell you when he gets home to-night."

Lady Duke looked a little alarmed at these public compliments.

"Alfred," she said, "is the most terrible flirt in the world."

"Oh," he answered gravely, "but this is no flirtation. Miss Corinna is a person who must not be trifled with in that style. Her disposition is too noble, too much out of the common, for such treatment. Ah!

here they come. We must have our congratulations ready. Mr. Duke, will you take in Miss Corinna to supper?"

Every one standing round was listening with some surprise. No one was so mystified as our young hero, Mr. Alfred Duke. He expected a display of bitterness, mortification, and spite.

During the supper, Mr. Doughty enchanted all the ladies about him with what they called his "dry wit." He was unsparing in his jests and criticisms. Miss Duke, who had contrived to get next to him, was convulsed with laughter. But still there was a strange bitterness in his tone.

"I must have some strange powers of entertaining," he said, looking at the young lady at the close of one of these appreciative bursts, "that has suddenly developed itself. Indeed, I have noticed that

whatever I say always tells—but I must add, only within the last few weeks."

Will Gardiner struck in with his usual indiscreetness.

"We all remarked that it has not been telling so well as usual in one quarter to-night, Doughty. How is that?"

Mr. Doughty winced a little, but recovered himself. Then looked at Lady Duke, afterwards at the happy pair, who were silent enough.

"I am one of those good-natured people who only wish to make their young friends happy. Things are going very fairly, I think, and after to-night I have reason to believe——"

Lady Duke turned pale. Will Gardiner burst into one of his favourite roars. He was delighted with this new turn, and his anxiety was now relieved. He at once took the cue, and for the rest of the sup-

per the table echoed with his rough jests, his congratulations and praises of the "happy pair," as he called them, with many an "Oh, you are very deep, Doughty. I vow he quite took me in."

About one o'clock the party broke up, and all went home. When the sound of clattering carriages had died away, the owner of the place was left alone in the great waste of his great music-room, alone with the long and disordered piles of chairs, and the music and instruments scattered about. After all those sounds there was a stillness. A sort of fury came into his pale worn face.

"Fooled and deceived again," he said aloud, as he literally stamped to and fro. "Are these smooth-faced women all demons, that they lay themselves out to play with our wretched hearts? Why could she not leave me in peace to my music,

without seeking to make me her plaything, show me off to the people here as one full of a childish infatuation? She has only used me to lead on that creature whom she loves. But I shall mark it to her and hers. She shall be left as deserted as she has left me!"

CHAPTER XVII.

A WARNING.

ALFRED DUKE had a secret dislike to the cold and rather mysterious being whose guest he had been, who seemed to gauge perfectly all the uncertainties of his weak soul, and to be actually acquainted with all the crooked passages and little cabins of his mind. There was jealousy and awe mixed up with these feelings, and when the element of wealth was added, there came a sense of his rival's superiority which seemed to vex his very heart. This

young gentleman was so accustomed to have his own way in the world, to be petted by the young damsels with whom he consorted in garrison towns, that any opposition annoyed him exceedingly. It must be again said that, if not actually "in love" with Corinna, he had a violent inclination towards that young person, such as gentlemen of the garrison often experience for the young ladies of the district where they are quartered, and he longed to show that he had conquered the prettiest girl in Brickford.

He was walking down to the club, rather proud of his last night's proceedings, and of the victory he had gained, of which, no doubt, all the ladies in the place were talking, or would be talking. After all, they would see that wealth did not always carry the day, and that the cold, crabbed fellow, with his owl-like airs of wisdom and giving

advice, had, in mess-table phrase, been "holed." The divine Corinna understood the difference between mere vulgar attractions of money and the wealth of youth and grace, which he possessed. As he indulged in these thoughts, he felt a touch on his shoulder.

"My dear Duke," said Mr. Doughty, for it was he, "I am sorry to stop you, but will you let me ask you a question? Do you ever make up your mind on a particular matter?"

The other looked at him haughtily. "Make up my mind? Perhaps I do; perhaps I do not. Why do you ask?"

"Not very satisfactory as an answer. But I do really wish you would in reference to one matter. I must tell you that you have given a deal of trouble and anxiety in one quarter, and have disturbed a poor family, who are in a sphere far below

yours. Now, is this fair; is it honourable; is it becoming a gentleman?"

The other started up. "Really, Mr. Doughty, you are a sort of relation of ours, but I do not think you are privileged to address me in such a style. What are my proceedings to you?"

"I am not to be offended," said the other, coolly; "and have come to speak plainly and candidly. I shall do so. All I wish is, that matters should be explained clearly and definitely. You had really a great triumph last night at my house. Every one—and there were two hundred people there—saw the honoured preference that you received. I am sure you deserved it. I have heard everywhere this morning that it is considered certain that you have won the affections of Miss Nagle, that you have made a very great conquest."

A curious twinkle of pride came into the

young man's eyes. This was the happiest flattery conceivable. The other saw it, and went on :

"As for me, an humble and distant admirer of her talents and beauty, I was completely distanced—literally nowhere. If I had any humble pretensions, they were effectually extinguished by your attractions."

"You really think so ?" said Mr. Duke, complacently. "Well, after all, you see, my dear Doughty, that money is not the chief thing in the world. Girls are not always ready to sell themselves for gold. But surely, you could not have seriously thought that a fine, handsome, brilliant creature like that would have wished to sacrifice her affections, even for your handsome fortune. Girls will be girls, you know, just as boys will be boys."

"No doubt," said the other. "And I

am delighted to hear such sense from you. The only thing is, has it occurred to you that this grand triumph of yours, at which you are smiling so pleasantly, may have been obtained at the expense of her mortification and unhappiness? You might prevent her obtaining one who would really love and cherish her, and place her in a situation of comfort, where she would not have to work for her bread, while you offer her in return the trumpery and trifling solace of your royal preference, which will neither support her nor shield her from mortification, nor provide for her, but, on the contrary, only leave her wretched, disappointed, deserted, and her whole life blighted. This noble and gallant course, I am sure, is not what you propose."

At this burst of what was almost eloquence, declaimed with a warmth and passion that contrasted strangely with the cold

temperament of the speaker, Mr. Duke was much put out. After a while he recovered himself.

"I am not to be driven into a corner in this way, and brought to book. What right have you to assume that I have any such intentions? I can allow no one to cross-examine me in this style."

"No right in the world," said Mr. Doughty, calmly, "beyond a fatherly sort of interest that I have in the young lady. You will admit that regard for her justifies a great deal. She must not be sacrificed. Then are you ashamed—as indeed I suspect you are—of having your august name coupled with hers, and are the people here to know that you mean nothing by these attentions? What must you tell her, too, for it is only fair she should know? Come, be honourable and straightforward. Have some generosity for this poor loving heart,

who has sacrificed you know how much for you."

"Indeed!" said the other, with a sort of triumph. "So this accounts for your bitterness. All because she was not to be tempted by money."

"Well, you are welcome to that assumption if it pleases you, provided you engage to take some distinct course. Either come forward and make her your wife, in spite of all,—for I know she loves you,—or leave this place, and leave her."

"And leave the coast clear for you. You are really not so intelligent as people think, or you must suppose me very stupid. Thank you. I am not bound to shape my conduct at any one's bidding, or to choose any particular course because you desire it. I may do what you desire, or I may not. I must decline to give any information on the subject."

"That is enough, more than enough. I shall be more communicative than you. Take a friendly warning. I venture to say that I know the course you have decided on, which is not a manly one. The last thought in your mind is that of marrying this music-master's daughter. You wish to go on in this pleasant, undetermined course which is sport to you, but death to her. With your pride of family, you would disdain to stoop so low, though she is infinitely above you. Now mark me. I look on you as unworthy of her, but still she likes you, and that is sufficient. From this moment every resource I possess, and such mental power as I have—which is more than you may give me credit for,—will be devoted to this set purpose: to make you declare yourself, and force you to carry out what you have engaged to do; or, if this be not your view, drive you away at once

from her side, and for ever, as I would some noxious animal. Mind, I would not for the world say this in anger or in spite. But, recollect, you have spoken just as bluntly to me. As sure as you stand there, it will be done. For you are weaker than I am."

Mr. Doughty made Alfred a bow, and, with a pleasant smile on his face, left him to reflect on this strange warning.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

MR. NAGLE always stood in awe of the cold and haughty reserve of his daughter Corinna where there were matters that concerned her dignity or that of the family. He fully expected that the result of the evening's work would be declared to him, and that he had gone to bed the future father-in-law of his friend, the "illustrious millionaire." On the following morning he broke out with :

"Well, Corry, love, out with your news.

You've 'snaffled' him at last? Give a kiss to your father, my future Mrs. D.!"

"I have no news of the kind you mean, papa," she answered coldly; "nor is it likely you will ever hear any of that sort."

"No news," he repeated in wonder. "You're joking, Miss. Why, the man's in love with you; the whole town sees it. What nonsense you do go on with."

"A delusion," said she; "one more added to the many that have done us so much mischief in our course through life. I tell you, papa, he does not think of me, nor I of him. You must put the whole idea aside."

"Ridiculous! Preposterous! Fiddle-dedee! Put it aside, indeed! How easy you talk of it!" were the only incoherent words that suggested themselves to Mr. Nagle.

"No doubt you are right, father. But I cannot be made the victim of the gossips of this place, or be pointed out as the scheming, intriguing girl, who, with her family, wished to take in a rich man. It has gone on far too long. He himself, if he does not already, would despise me later, for he would never believe that I could really love him for himself."

"And who the deuce cares——" was beginning Mr. Nagle, but he was checked by the severe look on his child's face. "O, I'll set all that right, never fear."

"*I* care, if you ask the question. But it is no matter now. The Brickford gossips shall have little to talk about in future; I can promise them that. Would to heaven I had never begun such folly."

"What idiotic stuff this is," said Mr. Nagle, in a fury. "D'ye mean to tell me you are going to take up with that young

snapperjack?"—a strange word that was born of sudden wedlock in Mr. Nagle's brain, of two other words, "whipper-snapper" and "skipjack"—"a young snapperjack, who has nothing in the world but the coat on his back? D'ye mean to tell me that?"

"No," said Corinna, haughtily, "I do not. But all this must be changed. It is your interest, no doubt, to keep up your friendship with Mr. Doughty. I cannot interfere in that. But as regards myself, I cannot go through this humiliating rôle any longer. I am weary of it. Now, will you understand me, father? From this day it must all end. You have secured whatever aims you have had in view by my means, though I blush that I should have lent myself to such things."

"Phew! This is absurd and incomprehensible," said Mr. Nagle, quite beside

himself with impatience. "What's at the bottom of it? what does it mean?"

"It may seem odd to you, I know, after the way in which I have behaved; but one of these days, perhaps, I may tell you the whole."

Mr. Nagle always felt that when his daughter spoke in this tone, it was to be an ultimatum. He was inexpressibly disappointed, "put out," and bewildered. Such a blow when he thought everything was settled so nicely, and going on "so swimmingly." He was, however, of a very buoyant temper, and before the day was over would be reconciled to the idea. He was now on such free and familiar terms with his "opulent friend," as he called him, that he was entitled to sound him on this mysterious subject. He repaired at once to his house, and found his friend threading the mazes of a quartet, assisted by a

German musician or two. Mr. Doughty received him good-naturedly, but with something of a change in his manner from the old easy-going and tolerant fashion.

"I really fear," said Mr. Nagle, confidentially, "that Corinna has been going on with some of her nonsense. You are not displeased are you? And you must not mind her—girls are so absurd now-a-days."

The other smiled at this odd speech.

"I see you are going to be severe on my protégée. The truth is, I have been behaving very thoughtlessly and selfishly, and it did not occur to me till last night, when I saw that my hearty interest has been turned by the good people of this place into a source of annoyance to her. I ought to have thought of this long ago, as I am so much older, and supposed to have more sense—I say supposed, for I can't claim to possess it."

Braham's favourite pupil was quite taken back at the candour of this confession. He was also hurt; and though the reader may have hitherto taken him for a trimming, obsequious character, that would accept any treatment, he had still a certain sense of pride.

"Then I must say, Mr. Doughty, that I do think it was scarcely fair to expose a child of mine to such a misconstruction. Here, for days and weeks she is seen with you, while your devotion to her in public and private has been so marked as to be unmistakable. Now it appears that all this turns out to be—er"—and Mr. Nagle stopped, much embarrassed for a suitable word, though "moonshine" would have been the expression in his own family circle.

"Platonic, perhaps?" suggested Mr. Doughty, with a smile. "And why not? How could I pretend to the affections of a

blooming young girl—I, a quaint, curious oddity, with my queer ways and tastes? True, I have money, which does away with a good deal of oddity. But the fair Corinna herself never dreamed of such a thing. I swear to you she didn't. Come, my dear Nagle, you and I have a regard for each other and tastes in common. Many a friendship and pleasant prospect has been spoilt by some such misapprehension as this. So leave me out of the question, and dismiss the idea from your mind altogether."

In answer to this rather "brutal" way of putting the matter, Mr. Nagle felt he had nothing to offer. Moreover, being a person of ambitious views, he generally considered his daughter's interests as completely secondary to his own. He looked ruefully at Mr. Doughty, gave a sigh, and thus accepted the situation.

"But, my dear Nagle," continued the latter, "you should look round, and notice what is going on about you. There is something far more suitable in view. There is youth, and good looks, and good station ready to come to her feet, only waiting the proper encouragement. *There* would be an alliance that would do honour to any family. Not that I think Mr. Duke quite worthy of her; but still, would it not be a most desirable match?"

"Oh," said Mr. Nagle, with open contempt, "that fellow. Why, he hasn't twopence halfpenny in the world."

"Oh! But he has. Besides a few halfpence may be added to his means. That is quite a minor obstacle. The real point is that he has won the affections of your daughter—that I know. And why not? Youth should be mated with youth, good looks with good looks. Any one who

would try and subvert this proper order of things is the wildest delusionist in the world. Think of the alliance! rank, interest, that will do a great deal; and as for money, is not the world full of friends, who will see that a young pair, marrying for love, and on nothing, shall not be unprovided for? It is a grand opening, my dear Nagle. Besides, we cannot allow a beautiful and innocent girl to be trifled with; to be talked of by the free-and-easy gossips of the place, to be made a plaything of by a young gentleman of condition, for his amusement during leave of absence from his regiment. He must, at least, be made to pay her the compliment of an offer of his hand: an offer with which you and the young lady can deal as she thinks proper."

Mr. Nagle, quite carried away by this eloquence, seized his patron's hand, declaring:

"You are right, sir! No man shall trifle with my daughter. He shall be made to do the handsome thing, depend upon it. I'll allow no jack-snapper"—he was so pleased with this odd conceit that he used it again in another shape—"to come playing tricks here. She has good blood in her veins, and is as good as any Duke among them. Though I *have* to thrum away at the keys, that doesn't make us lose our gentility. There's many a kerownet"—so he pronounced the word—"that we see on the panels of a pompous carriage that was won before now by the poor despised crotchets and quavers."

CHAPTER XIX.

"DEAR BROTHERS."

THUS then had ended this part of this little episode. Mr. Doughty, living in a world of music, simple, shrewd, retired, and solitary, yet perfectly familiar with the world, and the characters found in the world, had a very sensitive temper, which in time had reached to a pitch that was almost morbid. No one could have suspected that he had in his youth encountered a terrible disappointment, the effect of which had been to scorch up, as it were, all his sympathy with the ordinary things and personages of life, and

left him a kind of secular Trappist, who, uncowled and unfrocked, was "dead to the world." Indeed, it was said, on the authority of Lady Duke, that his brain had been a little unsettled by the stroke. But this speech may have been uttered in the hope of damping Corinna's chance. This second disappointment had left him well-nigh crushed, and the feeling that his last state was far worse than his former one. The only comfort in store for him now seemed to be the thought of the strange purpose which was working in his soul, to which he seemed to be bending all his thoughts with a feverish purpose. Was this some scheme of revenge, or some wild undefined plan of getting those who had trifled with him into his power? At this moment, perhaps, he hardly knew himself. He wished to do, to carry out, something, perhaps, just to occupy his thoughts.

Meantime, the little ant-hill bustle and intrigues of Brickford began to go forward in their ordinary course. Various parties had begun to congratulate themselves on the discovery of the state of affairs between Corinna and young Duke, which left Mr. Doughty, as it were, free, and a fair object of competition for others. Mr. Gardiner, the clergyman, with his lady, had long resented the matter of course style in which their claims on this rich relation's good offices had been put aside by more pushing persons, and the reverend gentleman had been stirred up by his lady "to make some exertions for his family."

Accordingly, one morning during the course of these events, Mr. Gardiner, the clergyman, was announced—that very affectionate brother of Will Gardiner, the Rev. Mr. Orestes of the lay Pylades—who presented himself with a certain nervous-

ness and embarrassment which did not escape his host.

"I have brought some news," he said, "which I know you will be glad to hear, as it concerns those excellent Nagles. I have been working very hard at old Humphries, the organist, and have at last got him to go. It has been a very difficult and delicate matter, as he has been so long in the place; and I can assure you he had a strong party among the parishioners. But Nagle is infinitely the better man, and I felt at last obliged to take the matter up myself."

Mr. Doughty smiled, then added, gravely: "No doubt you felt that the interests of church and congregation must be put above all questions of personal feeling. How long has this poor worn-out old organist, whom you have ejected, been on duty?"

"Why, I believe, since the church was built," said the clergyman, a little alarmed at the sympathy. "It is, of course, a little hard on him, but when I saw that you were so anxious about the Nagles——"

"Why the Nagles?" said the other, coldly. "You are not going to appoint Mrs. Nagle, or Miss Corinna Nagle, to the office."

"No, no, dear no. But I mean that, as you were such a judge, and considered Mr. Nagle to be beyond question the right man in the right place, I resolved, as far as in me lay, to forward your wishes."

"It was very good of you. But you must do something for the poor decayed musician as you *have* got rid of him so summarily. There must be a subscription, which I shall be glad to head. It is really pleasant to see how eager people are to gratify me. Now, tell me, how did you

like my music last night? Miss Corinna, I think, carried the day."

The clergyman's face suddenly became a little disturbed.

"It was the most delightful concert in the world. We were all enchanted."

"I dare say, too, you observed that something else besides music was going on. It would be splendid if my little musical attempt led to such a happy result as establishing the enchanting Miss Corinna in life. It ought to be brought about, and I don't see why it should not."

"The young man's attentions were indeed very marked," said the clergyman, eagerly. "Every one round us was noticing them. Oh dear yes!"

"I am glad to hear you say so. Though he must not be allowed to trifle with her. Don't you agree with me? I think we should all put our shoulders to the wheel to help

in the business. And I think, my dear Gardiner, that you, as clergyman of the parish, might do a good work by saying something in the proper quarter. You understand. You know my interest in the family."

"I shall speak to Lady Duke about it at once," said the clergyman, "and to the young man himself. It is very wrong of him to be trifling with any girl's affections in this style. He should marry her."

Suddenly entered fresh visitors. These were Will Gardiner with his daughter, "Mamsie," his pet and favourite, a young thing of about fourteen, but looking much older. The clergyman and Mr. Doughty were in a most confidential attitude, the former nodding wisely, as who should say, "You may depend on me," their heads close together.

Will Gardiner stopped in the doorway,

and actually coloured. His brother coloured also.

"Oh, I see, I fear I am interrupting," he said; "you have got secrets. I only came to tell you a bit of news, Doughty, that you will be delighted to hear."

Mr. Doughty received him cordially.

"Sit down," he said; "so you have brought the young lady, my friend Miss Watteau, as I call her, to see me. She is so like one of his shepherdesses."

"So I said to Slater—didn't I, Chirrup? She gave a sitting to Slater yesterday, who has quite taken up the idea, and is going to do her as a shepherdess with a lamb!"

It was the turn of the clergyman to look suspicious and uneasy now. So there were some things, then, that were not told to him when Orestes and Pylades went out together on those affectionate Sunday walks!

"What I came to tell you," went on Will, "was the grand coup we have managed for Nagle. We have routed that old impostor, Humphries—battered him out of his organ loft. So we can have Braham tramping away at the pedals next Sunday if he likes."

"I know," said Mr. Doughty, smiling a little maliciously. "Your brother came off here before you to tell me how *he* got him out at last."

"He!" said Will colouring, "not a bit of it! It was I who went to him. I wish you had heard how I bullied him. But trust our pious clergy for taking the credit of everything. Not content with having our souls to look after, they must have their holy fingers in every pie made in the parish. Ha, ha!"

The clergyman smiled feebly at this rough "badinage" of his dear brother's.

"It's not much matter," he replied tartly, "as to who did it. I, of course, as head of the church, could bring the matter to an issue. But as I was saying, we were all glad to forward Mr. Doughty's wishes."

"Oh, of course," said the brother, dryly. "Though, after this, I suspect our friend Braham Nagle will set himself up as commander-in-chief. Wonderful creature he is. I dare say he'll contrive somehow to get hold of the young fellow yet; though, as an alliance, it would hardly do for my Lady Duke."

"That's another consideration," said Mr. Doughty, "and should have occurred to the young gentleman before he set himself to the occupation of winning her heart. The thing is gone too far, and we must really all stand by Nagle in this, or rather by Miss Corinna."

"So we shall," said Will, tumultuously,

"if it's only for the good of society. Though, to tell you the truth, I do *not* think my lad does mean business. You see, after all, the blue blood of the Dukes and that of our friend Nagle would hardly do for mixing."

"Why not, pray?" said Mr. Doughty sternly. "I hate to hear that nonsense about 'blue blood' and such stuff. There is no blue blood, in England at least, and the real question is, is he worthy, not of the affections of that young girl, which he has won already, but of her hand?"

"Exactly," said the clergyman, enthusiastically, "that's the *true* way to put it! She might marry anybody!"

Will Gardiner glanced at his brother, and with a certain warmth, replied:

"That's all very romantic, but still people do make remarks; and say what you like, it's not exactly the custom."

Will Gardiner had a certain rude independence; and though he felt that his interests were concerned, could not bring himself to be so obsequious as his brother was.

The object of the present visit was to make his little "Chirrup" play before "such an excellent judge as Mr. Doughty." "She has been practising the whole week," said the enthusiastic father, "getting up, I believe, at six o'clock in the morning to have a private strum, eh, Poppets? Now, dear, out with your 'Summer Ripples,' and mind, you are before the best judge. But she's awfully frightened, my dear sir."

"Oh, papa, I am so afraid. Mr. Doughty will laugh at me."

That gentleman was good-natured, as indeed he always was to children, and the young lady began her "scramble," protesting that "he must promise not to look at

her." She was struggling through the usual violent digital leaps and splashings which such pieces as "Summer Ripples," "Raindrops," or "Cascades" seem to require, when the door was opened, and some fresh visitors entered — Lady Duke and her daughter.

This interest in Mr. Doughty was really amazing, and developing with a sort of *crescendo* movement.

CHAPTER XX.

LADY DUKE'S CONFIDENCE.

THERE were some elements of comedy in this scene, and even in the faces of the parties. A pride was developed in the eager father's face, as his child laboured on successfully, and which showed that he had forgotten all else but her gifts, such as they were; the clergyman having girls of his own at home, who he fancied were far more clever, though "not half so pushing," now exhibited a kind of rueful toleration in his face; while Lady Duke, who had

brought her own candidate, listened with a practised smile of toleration that seemed to mean "this is very fair indeed." The host himself often looked from one to the other of the assembled party with a quiet ironical glance, as though he perceived the odd competition which was being quietly carried on for his favour.

"There!" cried the delighted father, when his young girl had finished. "That's very creditable for the short time she's been learning. She's been grinding from morning till night, and she has got a little request, which she hasn't courage to make herself."

"Oh, if you wouldn't think it *too* much trouble," said Miss Chirrup, with an air which the experienced in such matters would have recognised as of being well tutored in the part, "just to let me come now and then and get a few hints——"

"Yes, it would do her more good than all the masters in the kingdom," struck in her father, seeing that she was faltering. And yet there was a certain genuineness in this demonstration of his. He was so impulsive, so fond of his children, that his interest for them seemed to lead him into these little devices, and perhaps prevented his seeing how transparent they were. But Mr. Doughty, always good-natured, praised the young damsel, and graciously promised that he would give her those precious hints she was so eager for. Lady Duke, who had come for the special purpose of receiving some of the same divine criticism for her own child, felt there would be a want of originality in going over the same ground, and was thinking how she might hit on something as effective, when Mr. Doughty turned to her.

"Well, where is our gallant amoroso, the

Alfredo mio? I suppose at the feet of his mistress?" Then added in a half-mysterious way, "Everything is going on admirably. They tell me that Nagle, our future papa-in-law, has got the appointment of organist; so that gives him a sort of permanent office."

Lady Duke winced at this good news.

"I fear Alfred will soon have to go and join his regiment. He can't be idling on here always."

"Oh, I see! Then you ought to hurry on matters. Everything ought to be settled at once."

"Hush! my dear Mr. Doughty," said the lady, with vexation. "You go a little too fast. I was indeed coming to you, to speak to you about this very matter."

"But why," said he, looking round with an amused air, "make a confidential matter of what is known to the whole

town? Our friends here were talking of it the very moment you came in. Every one is hourly expecting the joyful news. I say, Gardiner, where can our young Lochinvar be who is so gallant both in love and in war?"

"Why," cried Will, noisily, "I declare, here he comes to answer for himself!"

Mr. Duke started back when he saw the room so full, and found himself greeted by the obstreperous Will.

"Ha, ha, ha! Just talking of you, Master Duke," he said, seizing him by the shoulders. "Do you know it has been passed nem. con. by all Brickford that you are to come forward gallantly forthwith and do your duty like a man! No shirking to be allowed!"

The young man impatiently shook himself free.

"I am getting quite tired of this style

of joking," he said, "and perfectly sick of it!"

"Then beware the vengeance of the infuriated Nagle. I give you friendly warning. I wouldn't be in your shoes for a fifty-pound note. Fulfil your promises like a true lover. Our enchanting Corinna——"

But here Mr. Doughty interposed with a bitter tone. "Mr. Gardiner!" he said, "your spirits seem to carry you away. You make a joke of everything. This is a subject you know——"

"My dear Doughty, I quite forgot," said Will Gardiner, with a sudden humility that scarcely harmonised with his ordinary and accepted character.

"Yes, I am getting perfectly sick of this place," said the young man. "Every one is so free with me and my affairs. The whole town wishes to arrange them for me.

Can't they leave me alone? I don't meddle with them."

Lady Duke shrugged her shoulders at Mr. Doughty with an appealing air, and drew him away into another room.

"I came to speak to you about this very thing," said the woman of the world. "You see how admirably this Gardiner helps us on. He has certainly got a clumsy touch. But what am I to do in such a state of things? The boy is self-willed, of age, his own master, and the people here, as he says, have worried him to death about the matter. But we will soon have him back again, and then, I hope, he will do what we *all* wish; for she is a charming girl, and I'm sure we should all like her, notwithstanding the disparity in position."

"It is very handsome of you to say this," replied Mr. Doughty, "exceedingly so."

"But then, you see," continued the lady,

looking at him steadily, "there is a serious difficulty. No money on either side. Alfred won't have a hundred a year beyond the value of his commission, while the girl has not a sixpence; nor, as far as I am aware, is she likely to have anything. What do you say to this?"

"But surely, when a young man comes down from his own station to choose a young girl of the people, as I may say, money is the last thing he should look for. It is only love that could justify such a step."

The lady, in her heart of hearts, was inclined to answer, "Stuff and nonsense!" but replied instead:

"A very proper and nice feeling. But, you see, alas! my dear Mr. Doughty, we must look to the beef-and-mutton side of the question. With perhaps a young family, eh? Even supposing they had

nothing now, still, if there was a prospect, a something to look forward to, some provision that would drop in later——" And her eyes were fixed wistfully on the impenetrable face of Mr. Doughty.

"Well," he answered, after a pause, "in the case of a man like Nagle, who has to work hard for his crust, you know pretty well what ought to be expected."

"Oh, of course, I know that," she answered; "but what I meant was, would it be likely that anything could be done for her by friends and people of that kind? And indeed Alfred said that you hinted to him that something of the kind might be looked for in her case." And the lady looked at him very wistfully.

"Who could tell that," he said, "unless a fortune-teller? A prudent mother should not arrange a marriage on such a speculation as that. No one who respected a girl

like Miss Corinna, too, could offer her an eleemosynary gift of the kind as one gives a portion to a charity girl. No, no, the young fellow ought to think himself very happy to secure such a priceless being, and to be allowed to work for her."

Lady Duke made no answer, but gathered her shawl about her. It was evident that the answer had satisfied her one way or the other, as indeed her companion seemed to read in her face. As she was going out of the room he stopped her.

"Just pardon me. Do you think he loves her enough to do that, to brave all — his relatives, friends, the world, poverty, everything—sooner than give her up ?"

In genuine alarm : "Heaven forbid, my dear Doughty, that he should do anything so foolish. I know you are deeply interested in the girl, but, I implore you, don't

even mention such things. It will be the ruin of our family, of us all."

There was something in Mr. Doughty's face that had filled her with a sudden alarm, and carried away all her prudent and ingenious reckonings. A something which showed her that real danger was imminent, and that this man, so cold, so calm in manner and purpose, might actually have power to bring about this fatal alliance while she was weaving these frail cobwebs of future plans. This would be quite too high a price to pay for the mere chance of a share in old Doughty's bounty.

That gentleman, too, fancied that he saw in her face, as she left him, a new purpose —a hint of some sudden change that disturbed him a good deal.

"Corinna will think all this revenge," he said to himself. "Heaven knows I wish for no such thing! She has misjudged me

before, and will do so again. But the thing must work itself out now ; and why should she not suffer, as she has made others suffer ?"

CHAPTER XXI.

MR. NAGLE AT THE ORGAN.

AFTER Mr. Doughty's grand concert, and the rather important changes that had been crowded into the space of a night, Mr. Nagle rose up with the importance of a commander-in-chief. Weighty responsibilities were now falling on his shoulders. Music was actually with him sinking into quite a secondary matter; and if his services as a teacher were in tolerable request, he fumed at the recurring lessons as so many interruptions. He exclaimed impatiently in the

spirit, though not in the words of Lofty in the play, "I'll be pack-horse to none of 'em." He entered the houses of his pupils like some overworked secretary of state, and, according to his favourite practice, consumed a good portion of the time that should have been devoted to tuition, in easy conversation on matters wholly unmusical. Braham's scholar began, as some considered it, to give himself airs. He positively declared he could not go through the drudgery of dealing with raw, untrained organs, and such he forthwith bade go to Dobson, or Jones, or "some local stone-breaker," as he styled the inferior members of his profession. "I assure you," he would say, good-naturedly, "Dobson is a very good, honest, hard-working fellow, with a wife and six children"—as though they formed part of his musical gifts—"and you couldn't do better than go to him. He'll

put you through the dumb-bells, and the rest of it—grind you into the Doremifasol, and all that. When you've got the muscles well greased, and in working order, come to me. I could not do you a halfpenny-worth of good now—not one halfpenny-worth. Go to Dobson for a twelve-month."

"Stonebreaker" is not at all an unsuitable description of such professional gentlemen as Dobson and his brethren, who abound in every town, and who, honest souls! are the very hodmen of music. They thump at their pianos with a resolution worthy of those who are breaking stones on the road-side; bring out the human voice, and teach singing, much as a drill-sergeant will work at the arms and legs of his recruits. There were some such humble labourers in Brickford, who regarded the flashy gifts of Mr. Nagle

almost with obsequiousness, though he had snatched away the few crusts that found their way to their hungry jaws. But they hoped to be repaid by some such recommendations as we have described. Dobson, indeed, had won the favour of his patron by his remarkable self-abnegation and humility, and was spoken of in Nagle circles as "a very worthy, hard-working creature, to whom it was a charity to give a job. No one could be better if you wanted a puddler"—a metaphor, it may be presumed, drawn from one of the most laborious operations of the iron manufacture.

These, then, were exciting times for Mr. Nagle, and though there was some uncertainty in the future, he felt that he and his family were now perhaps the most important people in Brickford. He talked of quitting "that stuffy den" in the Cres-

cent, and of taking a handsome house in a more fashionable quarter. The little memorandum-book was really filling up with entries, and the Harmonic Matinées were being established. A little circular on tinted note-paper had already gone forth, announcing that these meetings would shortly commence, and by "the obliging permission of J. Doughty, Esq.," would be held in the "noble music-room" of that gentleman. Always soaring and ambitious in his views, Mr. Nagle had even conceived the idea of a "Grand Conservatory of Music" as he called it, where all sorts of arts should be cultivated; where there should be classes for vocal, for instrumental music, for counterpoint, for foreign languages, and even for organ-playing. His dream was that these branches were not so much to be taught by ordinary masters, as to be acquired, by a sort of inspiration, by

personal contact with himself and family. It was the tone that he wished to impart. The price of this rather hazy "course," including singing, playing, dancing, and, we may presume, the musical glasses, if the parents required it, and for the foreign languages, organ-playing, &c., was certainly reasonable—some five "geeneys" a year. Then "associates," who did not desire to study under Mr. Nagle, could be affiliated for the modest sum of "a geeney" a year, for which they were admitted to all the concerts, to *all* the rehearsals, to *all* the Harmonic Matinées, to *all* the Soirées Musicales and tuneful "Après-midis," and to the occasional dances—certainly a most generous and handsome "geeney's" worth. It was a prodigious scheme this of Mr. Nagle's, though cloudy enough; but it sounded so magnificent, that the subscriptions began to flow in. It must be said,

however, that the public were good-natured and indulgent, and expected nothing very practical from him. They were for a long time content with the airy programme which he set before them, and there was beside that little weakness, found in too many communities, of looking tenderly on the family which, by an auspicious marriage, was about to be raised, as it were, from the ranks.

Mr. Nagle often told his confidential friends that the coming change would make no difference in his life—in the profession he had lived, in the profession would he die. He felt that it ennobled him, and he it; at his time of life, "he was not going to become ashamed of it." The old Broadwood he would never give up. "It has stuck to me through thick and thin, come weal come woe," Mr. Nagle would say, as though he were repeating the marriage ser-

vice, "in sickness and in health, and I am not going to discard it now that I am a prosperous man."

There was a good deal of excitement in Brickford when it became known that the old organist had been expelled, and some plain unmusical people, who had not been fascinated by the glittering manner of Braham's pupil, or of Braham's pupil's bewitching daughter, spoke of the matter as a rather oppressive act. In a place like Brickford, every ordinary personage or functionary has his party of friends; and the case of this old retainer, who, indeed, had done his work respectably, justly excited a good deal of sympathy.

When, therefore, it was known that on the following Sunday Braham Nagle was to preside at the organ, there was quite a hubbub, and a more than usually large congregation attended.

It is curious what a judicious amount of self-confidence will do. It was a truth that the professor knew no more of that noble instrument than he did of the ophicleide, or of the double bass, yet on the general assumption that "he had sat at the feet of the immortal Braham," he felt that if any difficulty were to be noticed it might be attributed to the instrument. Indeed, he reasonably trusted a good deal to the ignorance of the congregation. He had, it is true, "presided at the harmonium," in the small Welsh chapel, and the gifts which he had brought to that function he considered more than sufficient for such "hodmen" as came to church at a place like Brickford. The stops and pedals were matters wholly unfamiliar to him. Yet he took his seat, drew them out and made them clatter with professional insouciance; and when the occasion arrived, gave out a

deafening and discordant jumble, with a vast number of wrong notes, which he tried to overpower in what he called "a *general rumble up*." Such was the art of the performer, that he contrived to make a sort of doubtful impression on the congregation, and to avoid leaving one of a complete break down, so overpowering and confused was the noise or "rumble up" that he succeeded in producing. With a marvellous self-confidence, he did not shrink from using the pedals, plunging his heel down on the lowest, which produced a sort of muffled reverberating thunder, which made the windows clatter and rattle, and distracted attention from the fact of its being the wrong note. When, however, "he got a chance," as he called it, he began to flourish away in flowing and pathetic voluntaries, indulging in mundane and operatic runs and melodies. Finally, he

played the audience out in a tremendous hurly-burly of wrong chords, wrong notes —"miss-fires," as he used to call them in tuition—a sort of slap-dash-helter-skelter, which he entitled a march "Religioso," but which might have been anything in the wide world, save what was musical. The result was a sense of bewilderment and doubt, though people certainly felt that there was a considerable difference between this "music of the future" and poor old Humphries's style. Will Gardiner was the first dissentient.

"Why, chaos come again is nothing to him! Nagle must have chartered all the cows, cats and dogs in the parish, and let them loose. I suppose it's the way Braham would have played if he had been able to finger the organ. But I am only what he calls a 'hodman' at music, so I suppose I am no judge."

The friends of the ejected Humphries thought it was "all a wild scramble," but they were overborne by the delighted criticisms of the young lady pupils, and the applause of members of the Harmonic Matinées, who were, in a manner, committed to approbation. Thus it was that Mr. Nagle came to play the organ at the Brickford church in succession to the ejected Humphries, with a most imperfect knowledge, and was pronounced on the whole to be a performer in the grand style.

CHAPTER XXII.

DOCTOR SPOONER.

THIS season in Brickford was for many a time of suspense, as it were, and also a time of acting. Mr. Doughty, grown thinner, and colder, looked out wearily and eagerly, waiting for something to be determined. The proud Corinna had her own purpose fixed, whatever that might be, but she too was preyed by suspense, the attendant mortification, the prying and the jealous looks, and the longing anticipations of her defeat. As for the gallant young Duke, he had become morbid and even sulky, and was worried

by finding himself in a position where he knew that he was expected to decide on some course, and that all the vulgar tattle-mongers of the place were watching him. This rather selfish and ornamental young officer had one grand aim in life, which was to avoid being "annoyed" or "worried;" and was very well content to bestow his affections on the enchanting Corinna, provided matters went very much as they would on some long night at a ball, where all was music and dancing, bright and flashing light, beauty, youth, and entertaining talk.

Now it was like awakening from a pleasant dream. He found himself suddenly brought face to face with business; he saw that he was expected "to do something," to take some rudely practical step from which he recoiled. Everything, too, seemed to have assumed new and more prosy

shapes. The divinity of the enchanting Corinna had invested the town of Brickford with golden clouds; now it seemed a depressing, murky, gloomy, manufacturing place, as indeed it was. Mr. Nagle, through the same medium, had taken the shape of some spiritualised Mozart or Mendelssohn. Was he not the father of an enchanting heroine, dealing with divine harmonies and exquisite melodies — in short, a dreamy and ethereal artist? Now he became of a sudden a common music-master, whose vulgarity and cheap and paltry manners quite jarred upon the fastidious Alfred. That Doughty, whom he had taken such a pride in defeating, he looked on now with a jealousy of quite another kind, as one who had shown a superior tact and knowledge of the world. *He* had kept himself free from this foolish entanglement.

And the enchanting Corinna herself, how was she regarded by the fickle swain whom she had enslaved? Had the general désillusionnement affected her? No one could have guessed from her manner or bearing that she noted any change in her admirer. Her own family could only see that she had the same calm, impassive, impenetrable air, behind which there was no piercing; that she seemed to be calmly awaiting some issue, whatever that might be, whenever it was to arrive. That issue was now not very far off.

It had come to a certain Monday morning, when Mr. Nagle, paying his accustomed visit to his opulent friend, found him a little unwell. He had a bad cold —had not slept very well during the night. Instantly the visitor was in a state of bustle and agitation.

"We must have in a medical man. My

dear friend, you must not neglect yourself. Would you like Parker, or perhaps Spooner —I think on the whole, Spooner."

Mr. Doughty was indifferent. He had thought of sending for some one. But one physician seemed to him as good as another. So he left it to his anxious friend.

Away spurred Mr. Nagle, always in his element when on some mission of this kind. He has a good many brethren and sisters in the world, who in any situation of the kind arrive booted and spurred, as it were, and delight in hurrying off express to fetch this person and that. For such persons a sudden illness is quite a godsend. Mr. Nagle having selected Doctor Spooner, made straight for that gentleman's house.

Dr. Spooner was a new doctor, who had come to open up the "practice" of the district, just as Mr. Nagle had done the musical ground. He was a young man,

good-looking, with glossy black whiskers, who possessed that valuable professional gift which the College of Physicians cannot impart, and which patients, strange to say, are often content to accept instead of knowledge, namely, "an excellent manner." He would appear so absorbed and interested in the story of a patient's symptoms, that it seemed, as one of his friends or enemies remarked, as if he were listening to the reading of a will when he expected to find himself a legatee. So much surprise, enjoyment, and interest were exhibited, that the patient was flattered, and conceived the idea either that he had such powers of narrative as to invest a dry subject with the charms of romance, or that his case had some special features of interest which distinguished it from all others. The new physician, too, had a low voice; was deferential, though firm; insinuating; dressed

well, and thus contrasted most favourably with the old-established doctors of the place, who affected the gruff Abernethy manner, and were too far advanced in life and in the profession to go with the times.

It was natural that this gentleman and Mr. Nagle should be drawn together, their principles being the same; and Mr. Spooner, besides, affected a certain deference, and even admiration, for the music-master, as being one who had seen a vast deal of the world. He conveyed the sense of this admiration so cleverly, that Mr. Nagle assumed the airs of a patron, and spoke everywhere of his friend as a "worthy, deserving, clever fellow;" and often used the recommendatory phrase, when a pupil was suffering from hoarseness or a cold in the head, "you should see Spooner at once." To Mr. Doughty he had used the same exhortation, "You should see

Spooner at once," and, as we have seen, hurried off to bring back the physician himself.

It was a curious circumstance, however, that, only a few yards from Doctor Spooner's house, Mr. Nagle should have reined up the imaginary charger on which he was mounted, and have become gravely reflective. It occurred to him that he was now about to introduce into the sacred preserve, which he had guarded so jealously, another candidate sportsman, and an idea of danger from so agreeable and entertaining a physician suggested itself. Was it not rather Quixotic, tempting Providence, as it were, in this rash way; thus introducing one who might hereafter hoist him, Nagle, on his own private petard? This thought struck him with a sudden panic, and it was possible that he might have turned back, and acted as "bringer" to

one of the more old-fashioned, but safer, mediocrities, when Mr. Spooner himself suddenly came up.

He was so obsequious and deferential, that Mr. Nagle muttered an internal "Pooh! pooh!" addressed to himself, and instantly imparted his intelligence. Then he carried the doctor off at once to his opulent friend's house, where the usual formalities, tactual, visual, and scriptural, were gone through; that is to say, of pulse feeling, respectful tongue examination, and prescription writing. Mr. Doughty tolerated these functions with more than his usual indifference, and scarcely looked at his new physician. So Mr. Nagle again said, "Pooh! pooh!" to himself in contemptuous rebuke.

After the doctor's departure, the patient detained his friend Nagle for a little chat.

"I can hardly speak," he said, "with

this cold. But tell me how are they all with you at home ?"

"Corinna will be dreadfully distressed when I tell her of this—quite grieved about you. I *know* she will."

"No, no ; she has something more engrossing to think of than a middle-aged gentleman's cold."

"Middle-aged !" exclaimed Mr. Nagle, with a horror, as though some one had stated in his presence that his opulent friend was a malefactor, had forged bonds, &c. "Why, boyish, my dear sir, would be the word ; boyish in mind, heart, soul, and body."

"Thank you for the compliment, which is well meant, though boyishness and middle-age do make a comic mixture. Well, everything is going on well ?"

Mr. Nagle scratched his chin uneasily.

"'Pon my word I don't know what to

say. There is a haziness about that young man and his proceedings, and Corinna is so dignified, that really, though she is my own child, I don't like to press her about the business. It's unsatisfactory somehow, and I'd really like——"

"To see something satisfactory. Well, we must only wish her plenty of valentines —to-day is Saint Valentine's Day, you know. Have the young men of Brickford been pouring in verses and odes?—No?"

"My dear friend, there it is. Girls are such utter fools with their fiddle-de-dee. I know well the man that I believe her heart to be set upon. There's some unlucky malon tongdew somewhere, and things won't go straight."

"You must only try and straighten them," said Mr. Doughty, indifferently. "That's all. Good-bye."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE LAMPOON.

AS Mr. Doughty had said, this was the month of February, and that particular day in the month of February which some millions of rational beings dedicate to over-loading the Post Office with strangely-painted cut-out cards and worse doggerel. This, perhaps the most idiotic of all British customs, was not neglected in Brickford, and in the morning before Mr. Nagle had paid his visit to his friend, the postman had left quite a packet of effusions of this kind. When Mr. Nagle

returned, he found his daughter cold and haughty, her eyes filled with a stern determination and indignation. Mrs. William Gardiner was sitting with her. He was in high good humour.

"What," he said, "not enough valentines, Corry, dear ?"

"It is too much," she said, with infinite scorn. "I cannot endure it any longer. Has it come to this now, that any creature of the place can make free with our name ?"

"In the name of all the discords—what is it, Miss C. ?"

"I mean that the end of all this plotting and finessing is that we have lost in respect, that my name is a byword. I cannot endure it longer. It is cruel and unfair. Raise yourself in the world, father, any way you can, but do not use your daughter to help you. But it serves us

right. I wish to Heaven we could fly from this place."

"I don't know what you are talking about," said Mr. Nagle, impatiently. "I am worried to death among you all. I tell you I do everything for the best——"

"Is that for the best?" said Corinna, in her stateliest manner, throwing down a paper upon the table. "It is degrading! I feel like some miserable adventuress; but, as I said, it only serves us right."

"Yes," said Mrs. Gardiner, "these are some printed verses that are being circulated, and I thought it my duty to bring a copy here."

Mr. Nagle took up the paper. It was a copy of verses, and he read as follows:

TO MISS C—R—NNA N—GLE.

Oh, charming Miss Nagle,
Are things quite en règle,
Is money or love to be winner?

There's age, which is cold,
And youth without gold,
At the feet of the lovely Corinna.

There's D—ghty and Duke,
To which do you look?
One handsome, the other much thinner,
To fall 'twixt two stools
Is the fate of some fools,
So keep this in mind, fair Corinna.

Young D—ke will be doughty,
Old D—ghty will flout ye,
As surely as I am a sinner,
But that priggish young D—ke
You never will hook,
Do your best, enchanting Corinna!

Mr. Nagle perused this doggerel to the end. "Uncommonly free and impertinent," he said, "but still—clever."

"They are welcome," answered Corinna, "for we have deserved it, and have invited it. And you, you papa, are the cause of this degradation for your child. What can we expect when we attempt to go out of our station?"

"It is very fine laying it on me," said Mr. Nagle. "You were making up to this young spark, who has no more honourable intentions about him than I have."

"Who do you suppose has done this?"

"It is very hard to say," said Mrs. Will Gardiner. "There are no clever people in Brickford. I mean natives. Is there any one that you could have offended, that bears you animosity, or is jealous? It is like the work of some jealous person."

"Why surely it couldn't be the man I have just left now, Doughty. Oh, nonsense."

"A most noble revenge truly," said Corinna, suddenly snatching the paper, "to stab at a poor girl in the dark. But I don't believe it of him. He is too generous to stab in the dark."

"Who, Doughty? ridiculous! He write lampoons, nothing of the kind; though in-

deed, 'pon my word, he did ask me this morning had you received any verses."

"That looks rather like it," said Mrs. Gardiner. "None of the people in this place have sense enough to put such rhymes together."

"Still, he wouldn't describe himself in that way; as 'Old Doughty,' and all that——"

"It matters little," said Corinna. "All I ask is this, and I implore it of you. Do not let me be dragged through the mire in this way—be offered to the best bidder to be rejected contemptuously any more. I cannot bear it. It must not be. If you love your daughter, respect her, or wish her to be respected, you will leave me out of these wretched, restless plans. It is contemptible, unworthy, to be using your child as a stepping-stone!"

Mrs. William Gardiner, seeing that a

warm discussion was likely to arise between father and daughter, and having accomplished the charitable object of her visit, now took her leave. Mr. Nagle then broke out with considerable heat.

"Oh, fiddle-de-dee!" he said. "I can't have this nonsense! I want no stepping-stones, as you call 'em. My name and reputation are pretty well established. I have fought my own way, ma'am. Ask anyone who Braham Nagle is. I am not quite so foolish as you would make me out. The whole failure is owing to your own fault. We might have had Old Doughty at this moment, I firmly believe, only for your high-flown romance."

"Yes," said Corinna, "and at this moment he would have despised me, and have been persuaded that we wanted him only for his money. I could not have endured that. I cannot endure it!"

"More fool you; and what have you to endure now? To be laughed at by all the envious women of the place."

"Well, it all must end, father. We must give up these wretched plans, which, indeed, I have only tolerated for your sake. I wish now to work for my bread, to confine myself to our own proper station."

Had the immortal Braham risen through a trap-door suddenly and stood beside him, Mr. Nagle could not have been more astonished. "Why this is all moonshine and —and——" the word would not come, so he had to use his favourite one—"all fiddle-de-dee!"

"As you insist on forcing me into this course, I must act for myself. I wish," said Corinna, not heeding this familiar phrase, "to accept the proposal which I declined before, and go and be a public

singer on the stage. I shrank from it at first, but now I see I must do it."

"Well, of all the things in the world I ever heard!" was the only exclamation Mr. Nagle could find, as he saw in her face that calm, but not hostile look of determination which had so often before checked his angriest expostulations.

As she quitted the room, his eyes fell on the obnoxious "lampoon," as he called it to himself. This outrage had really made him uncomfortable: it was low and mean; an undignified proceeding, a "gross liberty" in short. As for its coming from Doughty, that was a mere girl's delusion; it was more likely the work of that ejected Humphries. Most probably, though, "that woman," Lady Duke—he was always, as it were, denouncing an offender with a "that," like a finger of scorn. There was a hard hostility about the lady he never

could relish ; a cold indifference even to his conjuring with the mighty name of Braham. Much wondering at these changes, Mr. Nagle put on his hat with some depression of spirit, and went away to preside at one of the meetings of what he called a " Mat.," that is, one of the Harmonic Matinées.

END OF VOL. I.

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